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GOD AND THE SOLDIER

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# GOD AND THE SOLDIER

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BY  
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AND  
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## PREFACE

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This book had its origin in one of the great camps in France where some of the chaplains had a weekly meeting presided over by the Rev. J. Harry Miller, one of the senior chaplains. At these meetings the problems which confront the soldiers and the Church were freely discussed. At a time when the writers were working in that camp—the one as the Director of Religious Services in behalf of the Y. M. C. A. and the other as preacher and lecturer with the Scottish Churches Huts—they were invited to open these discussions on alternate weeks. The addresses then delivered are now published in this form at the suggestion of those who took part in the discussions.

The authors do not pretend to have arrived at any final conclusions. They only hope that these addresses will indicate the direction in which they found their thoughts moving when in touch with the grim realities of war. They do not claim to have given an answer to the questions which the war has evoked from many

troubled hearts; they are only able to show how urgent these questions are.

The different chapters were written without the advantage of mutual consultation, and they now appear with but slight alterations. If this book but show how the writers' minds were stirred by contact with the great army, and by intercourse with the men who are garrisoning its soul, and if it will lead others, with greater experience and fuller knowledge, to express frankly their thoughts on these problems, their purpose will have been served.

N. M.

J. R. P. S.

Edinburgh,

*October 27th, 1917.*

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IS GOD TO BLAME?

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# GOD AND THE SOLDIER

## CHAPTER I

### IS GOD TO BLAME?

SOME chaplains tell us that theological questions are not rife in the minds of soldiers; and that, amongst the rest, the problem of the Sovereignty of Divine Love over a world, in which this war has come to be, is of little concern to them. I think we may reasonably doubt that opinion—partly because it is inconceivable that those who see the horrors of war face to face should not find food for thought concerning the world-government which permits them, and partly because we have direct evidence to the contrary. In certain instances, soldiers have been known to discuss this matter for long stretches of time, and sermons and addresses upon it, provided they were frank and open, never failed to rivet attention. But, for the most part, the man

who expected that those who were in daily touch with death would have much to teach him upon these perplexities came empty away. It is universally acknowledged that soldiers are mostly fatalists in time of battle. "If your luck's in, it's in: if it's out, it's out" is the common attitude. Only the bullet with a man's name and address on it will ever hit him; but no parapet will shield him when that one comes along. It is an attitude of mind that is Calvinistic, without the high, religious sense which a genuine Calvinism always possesses. It only requires the exclamation, "Kismet!" to make it indistinguishable from the mental attitude of the East. Some religious observers find comfort in its prevalence, but it is hard to see why they do. For it is only *a new indication of the stupefying effects of war.*

At the same time, while there is this nonchalant assent to a rigid Sovereignty, which foreordains all that comes to pass, when soldiers had time for reflection, after the actual strain of fighting was over, it needed little probing to discover that many were wondering how Christians were going to square, with the

conception of a God of Love, the fact that yesterday a thousand bodies of human beings had been predestined to be blown into bloody pulp. "Whatever is right, this is not," exclaimed a young officer, himself a candidate for the holy ministry, after a night of peculiarly gruesome experiences. The fundamental immorality of the whole thing was the one point that he saw clear. And the question arose at once, what about God? Does He indeed create evil? And, if so, is He as worship-worthy as His own creatures, who would uncreate it if they could? To these questionings, soldiers have no answer; but they expect one from the Church. Resolvings of contradictions, and visions of the higher unities do not come in the trenches: but a state of mind is engendered there, which makes for sharp criticism of traditional positions. Christian teachers will be put on their mettle in days to come by men who will want plain English on fundamental matters. Not only by soldiers—but by that great multitude, which scarce anyone can number, whose hearts hold wounds that will not heal, and whose spirits are bitter within them. There are men walking our streets in

whose hearts smoulder fires of resentment against a Universal Sovereignty which has bereft them of their sons; there are many French mothers who have taken refuge in the same cynicism which led a bereaved peasant-woman in a little village of Normandy to sneer, "Le bon Dieu, il est en permission." And for the Church blandly to go on saying that God could have prevented it all if He had chosen, and that, at the same time, He is as loving as Jesus Christ, is to make certain that these exceedingly hungry sheep, looking up, will not be fed. There are, indeed, some, and these often men whose piety entitles their opinions to respect, who deprecate over-much dogmatic speech upon such a matter, on the ground of the vital importance of retaining intellectual reverence. It is true that all men must approach the thought of God not only with humble hearts, but with humble minds. Who are we to utter counsel concerning the Most High? "Soon as we speak, we err." At the same time, it is the duty of the Church to declare God, according to her knowledge of Him, in the halting language which is the only medium we have for ex-

pressing our thoughts. She has not feared to do so in days past; nor must she fear to-day, if she is to retain the respect of mankind.

## I

All branches of the Catholic Church, Reformed and Unreformed, hold a high doctrine of the Sovereignty of God. Not least conspicuous amongst them in this direction has been the Scottish Church. The late Monsignor Benson, in a book estimating the various British Communion from the point of view of the Church of Rome, fastened especially on the Scottish doctrine of God as full and clear in the Catholic sense. Even when Presbyterianism has set itself to simplifying its doctrinal statements, its declarations concerning God have been such as to make Him in all things supreme. "We believe in, and adore, one living and true God, Who is spirit, personal, infinite and eternal, present in every place, the Almighty Author and Sovereign Lord of all; most blessed, most holy, and most true; perfect in wisdom, justice, truth and love; to us most merciful and gracious: unto

Whom only we must cleave, Whom only we must worship and obey. To Him be glory for ever." After such manner has statement been made, and no Catholic Christian will want to see such expressions enfeebled. A religious man feels that he can assent to no positions which prevent him from joining in the old triumphant shout, "the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." Consequently, no surprise need be felt that a certain impatience manifests itself with earnest and well-meaning people, even with Mr. Britling himself, who cast aside, as a worn-out garment, the grand phraseology in which, at all times, the Church has garmented her thought of the Supreme Being; or that taunts should be levelled at them to the effect that they are substituting a godling for God. No idea of the Uncreated is likely long to hold sway over men's minds which does not present Him as high and lifted-up, as the One from Whom all things flow, the great I am, Who inhabits eternity. Indeed, it is impossible that religion itself shall continue apart from a confidence in the controlling power of God. We cannot live unless we believe that, while it is not in man that walketh

to direct his steps, it is in God that ruleth to direct them for him. If there is no Will in which is our peace, there is no peace for us anywhere. Apart from faith in the directing power of God, the larger part of the Psalms would have to be cast away, and that the more valuable part. Therein would be a task of revision of the Psalter which would appal even Bishops. No longer could Scottish folk sing in their times of trial:

“Before me still the Lord I set;  
Sith it is so that He  
Doth ever stand at my right hand;  
I shall not moved be.”

The one sure ground of optimism itself would be cut away from beneath our feet; for our ultimate hope of good, for the individual as for the race, depends upon the final control of experience by “the great Over-reason we name Beneficence.” It is because we believe, with the Psalmist, that the Lord reigneth that we can, with him, call upon the earth to be glad. An impoverished, struggling, half-helpless God can never be the God of Christianity.

## II

Where, then, do we find ourselves? Every religious instinct we possess cries out "God reigns"; and, meantime, there are the ghastly facts of the war. Not, let it be observed, that these constitute any new problem. Probably the years of peace contained as much grotesque evil as the years of carnage. Cancer, consumption, to say nothing of syphilis, existed then; and the under-world was crawling with iniquities much more unlovely than the shattered forms of a battlefield. All that the war has done has been to make the problem of evil living to many minds that had hitherto known little of the more tragic aspects of life. We must not allow ourselves to imagine that our experiences of these past three years have created any new difficulty for Christianity. They have only diffused the knowledge of their existence, and have given edge and point to them for us all. We walk on paths that Job knew well, when we traverse the regions where human pain and divine love meet in seeming opposition. But, at the same time, a painful

novelty is given to the question to-day, because of the number of people who are interested in it. Never before, in all the world's history, were so many hearts sad. Never before did the bat-like wings of despair cast so wide their hateful shadow. Hence it is that the thought of those who would heal has fastened itself anew on this age-long problem; hence the irritation with answers that seemed to satisfy in less poignant days.

For theology, the battle rages round one word, the word "omnipotent." Many of the younger clergy will have nothing to do with it. They perceive clearly the logical pitfalls to which it is an unerring guide; and they desire to see "all-conquering" in its place. Warnings as to the dangers contained in its use are not new. They have been pointed out for long. John Stuart Mill bluntly told us that if we laid it aside many of our difficulties would be laid aside with it. Mr. Thomas Hardy has been no less explicit:

"Beneficent

He is not, for He orders pain,

Or, if so, not Omnipotent:

To a mere child the thing is plain."

None can fail to feel sympathy with an attitude of mind which desires to part company with so uneasy a comrade as this word has proved to be. The fact that the Scriptures are full of it, and particularly the devotional Scriptures, need not distress us. For, apart from questions as to niceties of translation, the devotional Scriptures are not theological treatises. Indeed, they have suffered greatly from being so regarded. A word like omnipotent may be used in a hymn of adoration, where a theological writer might feel called upon to hedge it about with explanatory clauses. What we are to be concerned about is not a word, but the idea that the word conveys. The question for the Church is not whether she believes in the omnipotence of God, but what meaning she puts into the term. The settlement of that question is likely to agitate us for some time to come.

### III

First of all, we must come to agreement that the doctrine of the omnipotence of God does not include power to do everything that can

be expressed in a grammatical sentence. Some critics of Christianity seem to imagine that a point is made if it is admitted that the Almighty can not perform some manifest absurdity, such as the creation of a world in which the laws of thought are blue and syllogisms are round. If God could do these things, we are all mad, for the juxtaposition of such ideas seems to us insane; and all our thoughts of Him are the thoughts of fools, and the sooner we forget them the better. Occasionally stout supporters of verbal orthodoxy play into the hands of these logical artists. A soldier in a hut in France not long ago claimed that God could do these very things, and thereby caused the ungodly present to rejoice. But even he found a limit to his thought of omnipotence. God could, according to him, make the laws of thought to be untrue; He could make black to be white, and an object to be both at the same time and in the same respects; He could secure that two and two should make five. But when he was asked if God could lie, he drew the line sharp and distinct. God cannot lie, he said; therein wisely agreeing with Scripture.

Whereby we are brought to the presently

most important proposition upon this matter—namely, that there are some things that God cannot do. Any doctrine of omnipotence must start from that point. The range of impossibility is, for the moment, of no importance. It is the fact that matters. We do not claim for God a power to do anything, however immoral or absurd. On the contrary, we vigorously deny not only that He would, but that He could, do anything of the sort. The extent of the limitation we do not attempt to define, but we admit its existence. And we are bound to try to make explicit the source from which it springs, which is none other than the moral nature of God Himself. God, the Ancient Truth, is true to Himself in all His ways; and consequently much that we can imagine as possible, or know to be actual, can never issue from His will.

There seems at present a tendency to discover a compulsion upon God outwith Himself. The Platonic doctrine of Necessity is frequently appearing in a Christianised form. God is regarded as the Divine Artist, who is limited by the nature of the material in which He works. He has to make attempts to find

out the noblest forms in which matter can be moulded: and His dream of a perfect world is thwarted by the intractable nature of that which constitutes the world. It is the old bargaining between Reason and Necessity over again; and the majority of Christian people will fail to find relief along that line. Apart from the insoluble dualism to which it leads, such views are opposed to the thought of the relation between God and the world, which is one of the clearest teachings of Scripture. Behind the world stands God; forth from the word of His power came all created things; and without Him was not anything made that was made. The conception of a God struggling to reduce chaos to order, and continually finding Himself hampered by a grim master more potent than Himself, may conceivably be true, but it is distinctly not Christian; and it would be better to admit the failure of the Christian view than to attempt to graft such ideas upon Christianity. Necessity manifestly exists; but it must be a Necessity in the nature of God alone.

What, then, are the Christian axioms concerning the nature of the Supreme Being?

They are two, first that God is infinite Energy, and second that He is infinite Love. The former we learn from the works of His hands; the latter through Jesus Christ. Not that we exclude the thoughts of God as holiness, or as altogether righteous, which the prophets were never weary of proclaiming. Far from it; we maintain that they are implicit in the conception of Love as given by our Lord. Wherefore, we do not need especially to mention them. A love that is not holiness and justice is not the love of Christ. When we have said that God is love, we have said everything that lips can say concerning the moral majesty of the Most High.

It is from these two fixed points that we must start, when we would speak about the compulsions within God. Theology has erred when it has begun from the Divine Sovereignty as axiomatic. The range and the type of any sovereignty is determined by the nature of him who wields it; and we cannot describe it in any terms, such as omnipotent, until we know that nature. It is, of course, always possible for theologians to say that, considered as Will,

God is free to do anything. But that does not take us much further, because God is not unconditioned Will. He is Love; and His Will moves at the dictates of love. To take a human illustration, an ordinary Christian man, considered as Will, is free to murder his mother. He has plenty of opportunity and plenty of means. Failing all others, his two bare hands could choke the life out of her. Nevertheless, the mother may sleep in peace. The sons simply could not do it. Contrariwise, the sons may be conceived as free to refuse to go to their mother's aid if another attacker threatens them; but there are few sons who could sit still in the presence of such a spectacle. Action to defend would be inevitable. In both cases they would will according to their love.

Similarly with God. It is beyond controversy to say that, if He is Love, there are some things that He cannot do, and others that He must needs do, or fail to be Himself. And the conception of omnipotence must square itself with that fact. If the logicians demand it of us, we freely grant them that God is not

only impotent to do that which contradicts love, but that He is impotent to avoid doing that which love demands.

Can we, further, discern any definite acts in which this inherited compulsion of the divine Nature displays itself? Surely we can; even to the extent of laying down two propositions which go far to meet our difficulties: (1) that God, being energy, was compelled to create; and (2) that God, being love, was compelled to create this world. They are at least worth glancing at as subjects for discussion.

#### IV

Our Lord Jesus once Himself made statement of the ceaseless activity of God: "My Father," He said, "worketh hitherto: and I work." It is a picture of the God displayed in Nature—never quiescent, never passive, but ever bringing forth new forms of life. What else could a God who is Force be doing? We have sometimes thought of Him as One Who had a choice between dwelling in eternal inactivity, like some pale King of endless death, and "out of His mere good pleasure" fashion-

ing the worlds; as if He were a Being Who has power, rather than One Who is power. Science has come to rebuke and correct us, and to give us the conception of a God Who is a *Cause*. Words like "creation" have perhaps too specialised a meaning. We should go no farther than to say that God must needs be continually expressing Himself in forms of life that flow from Him, and that continually are being moulded so to become a perfect expression. All that we mean is that it is impossible for God eternally to do nothing. He must do something; and our world is a part of the something, which, in point of fact, He has, by Himself, been compelled to do.

The more important proposition is the second, that the Divine Energy, which is love, had no choice but to express itself in our world. For here lies all our difficulty. It is such a tragic world—so filled with sin and sorrow. If we had been denizens of regions full of radiance, we should never have asked ourselves whether there were any theological problems in the existence of the world. It is solely the existence of a world such as this in which we live that has brought our anxious enquiries

into being. But it is a less assailable position to occupy, to maintain that *this* world had to be, than to maintain that *some* creation had to be; provided we admit that God is Love. That fact, which is the sad world's hope, is also explanation.

For love cannot exist in a vacuum. It is easier to believe in a God of eternal inaction, than in a God of Love without beings on whom the love can be exerted. To call a single Being love, with no object to love, is as near a contradiction in terms as may be; for love involves a relation between two at least. There is a well-known theological argument upon the Holy Trinity, which is an admission of this fact. Dorner found that the thought of love in God was dependent for him upon the existence of Persons within the Godhead, who could love each other. But, apart from the fact that this high region is "dark with excess of light," there is also the fact that such love must be the love of God for Himself, and does not, therefore, afford opportunity for the complete display of the loving principle. The doctrine of the Trinity is a great attempt to make credible the conception of absolute Personality; but its

truth would not afford scope for the action of the love of God. That requires beings distinct from itself. Wherefore, we find from the Most High creatures proceeding, as children from a Father, made in His own image, but separate from Him, whom the Divine Heart can love and from whom it can receive love in return.

Once this principle is admitted, the subsequent difficulties for Christianity are greatly simplified. If the principle of love in God contains within itself the necessity of the creation endlessly of beings with the power of loving, at once the possibility of evil is in the world. For love is the free-est thing we know. Obedience, allegiance, service can be compelled; but love, never. It has to be given. The moment that God created beings with a dower to love, He created them free; and the moment He created them free, He created the power to hate instead of to love, and, consequently, the possibility of the jarring of all the harmonies of the world that should be so full of concord and of loveliness.

It must be observed that a great deal depends on this idea of inherent compulsion. If

God could have refused to create a world of free beings, why did He not do it, seeing the ghastly horrors that freedom has brought in its train? We claim for Him foreknowledge, or rather the omniscience of One Who, from the high places of the Everlasting Now, looks down upon the tides of time; and if He, before the foundation of the world, saw the agonies and heard the shrieks that are multiplied a thousandfold to-day between Flanders and the Vosges, why did He not stay His hand? It will not do to ride off on pleas of "self-limitation." If a man refuses to fashion an evil himself, but restrains himself from its removal, though it be within his power to end it, he is no less blameworthy; and we think poorly of God, if we apply to Him meaner ethical standards than we would apply to ourselves. Either God had to create a world of free beings, or He had not. If He had not, He is ultimately responsible for the tragedies which they suffer and cause. But if Love must needs bring into being creatures that can love, and if they choose to use their freedom banefully, then there are no shoulders on to which to lay the blame but their own.

## V

Let us, then, assume that the appearance of a world of creatures with a power to love, and therefore free, was of necessity, owing to the nature of God. It is clear that rebellion against the perfect Will was a possibility; in point of fact, we all know that it is a reality. But it may be doubted if we realise how vast that reality is.

There can be little question that most of us suffer from too good a conceit of our own world. We speak as if this little earth were the universe; whereas it is a somewhat inconsiderable member of a third-rate planetary system. We regard ourselves as the grand rebels against Eternal Love, when, in fact, we are grasshoppers and the children of grasshoppers. Ancient Christian teaching should come back and help us to be humble. We learn, in ancient story, of high rebellion against the Most High, from which our little tragedies have issued.

There is nothing in reason which should make it difficult for us to think that the uni-

verse contains greater created intelligences than our own. From the Primal Source there surely has flowed a stream of beings of vaster make than we are—great Angels that do His bidding, Cherubim and Seraphim that continually do praise Him. And tradition has it that the chiefest of all (for Lucifer was first of all creatures in loveliness and power) was he who found it earliest in his heart to misuse his freedom. From him the miasma spread, until an atmosphere was developed, which is the real Prince of the Power of the Air, which has tended, for those that breathe it, to make rebellion easier than obedience, and sin than righteousness.

The fact is that the Church must consider again the doctrine of the Devil. In recent times it has been laughed out of court; but it is far from a laughing matter. Not that we are called upon to believe in an absolutely malignant Will, that opposes itself to the Will of God; but that we must consider the possibility of the existence of beings, vastly greater than ourselves, which, like ourselves, are sinful in the sense of resisting God's purposes, and which, with us, are creating a "tone," that sur-

rounds us—in which, in a tragic sense, we live and move and have our being—whereby God's Will is thwarted and the beauty of His world is marred.

In fact, the dire possibility seems to have occurred. The freedom that comes with love has been misused; and that on a terrific scale. God finds the world, that came from Him at Love's impulse, in a turmoil of opposition to Himself. Is He to blame? How can He be to blame? The devices and desires of self-willed hearts are to blame. It is sin that has brought all these horrors upon us. Even the poor earth itself, which was meant to be so fair, has been turned to ugliness thereby. France used to be called "la Belle France." Go to Contalmaison to-day and mark how fair she is. Her once lovely undulations, dotted with peaceful villages, are one long, desolated sea of mud. God may be unable to prevent the misuse of freedom; but He can secure that we make its results extremely ugly, and thus urge us to seek beauty and peace in harmony with His Will. All unloveliness, all that brings terror to the heart in Nature, ultimately, perhaps, may be traced to the door of rebellion

against God. If men can make such travesties of the beauty of France, cannot the influence of the larger revolts against God's Will be seen in the confusions that perplex us in Nature? After all, all phenomena are the expression of spiritual realities; and devil-fish and octopuses may be only indications of the confusion brought into God's world by the invasion of it by spirits that have turned from Him. If a stranger, say from Mars, were brought into the world and told that God had made it, and then was taken to see the ruins of Ypres, he would be puzzled about God. He would be eased in his mind if he knew that these desolations of once happy homes were due to man in his proud rage. Similarly, if we knew more, that which seems terrible in Nature may be explained. The influence of misused freedom may very easily spread more widely than we are ordinarily inclined to admit.

## VI

In any case, God is no more to blame for the world's tragedies, than a father is to blame for the sorrows of a wilful son. But if that be so,

where is our confidence? If the world has turned against God, and if there be forces in it that work against Him, where is His control? What happens to the quiet confidence of a mother, who, in prayer, leaves her lad in God's hands? Our one security is this—"the Son of God goes forth to war."

There is no question that He is at war. And He shows forth the Father, who is no quiescent God, beaten back by the powers of evil; but a God who is correcting, adjusting, transmuting—working in every way for the final perfecting of His kingdom. Pain, then, as we see it, is not a difficulty; it is an evidence of a God, Who has thrust Himself into the struggle, and will not yield till victory comes. And He has His coming victory sure. We cannot prove it, but we believe that Love will win in the end. We believe that Love is very strong. We believe that the sharp, merciful weapons of pain and loss and darkness will be used to the uttermost. We believe that in the days of carnage the loveliness of Love will become only more apparent. We hope that all created beings finally will turn from their wickedness and live; and then at last all crea-

tion, which has travailed and groaned in pain together until now, will reflect the glory of His presence, Who then will be all in all. Our confidence is not in an arbitrary Ruler Who ordains, but in a Heavenly Father Who will never yield His children even to their own follies. We trust in the unfailing patience of God, seen in Him Who went out to seek the one lost sheep, far amidst the distant mountain-sides, until He found it. We believe that God is working and fighting for us and for our beloved; we believe that He is Love and that Love is the greatest thing in the world. Wherefore, as they pass from us to danger, we still confidently sing, "The Lord shall keep thy soul."

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THE UNENDING WAR

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## CHAPTER II

### THE UNENDING WAR

**T**HE thought often crosses the mind how splendid the world would be were there no strife, no evil, no holocaust of war. Why did not God so order the world that men would be ever at peace and ever happy? One answer to that may well be that there are greater things in life than peace and happiness. Man was not placed on earth to taste sweetness and be cloyed of happiness; but rather that he should do noble and great things and prove himself a God-made man. But there can be no noble deeds if the deeds are done by compulsion. There would be no value in being good if it were impossible to be anything else. It may delight the imagination to conjure up the vision of an earthly paradise when man would be innocent because untempted, sinless because the way of sin was barred, but such a life would be that of a soulless mechanism—the life of stagnation. And,

when all is said, progress in the wilderness is better far than stagnation in any Paradise. God therefore made us men, endowing us with the gift of freedom, and not mere cogs in a wheel. So great is the gift of freedom that God risked all anguish that the love of His children might be the love of free men and not of slaves. And if the gift of freedom implied the possibility of its misuse, conflict and the battle long drawn out, yet it is worthy of the price. For goodness bearing the stamp of the fire is infinitely greater than a mechanical innocence.

## I

The gift of freedom has entailed a long and weary fight against sin. By that word sin our fathers meant everything that resisted and fought against the purpose of the God of Righteousness. We, however, have lost, in great measure, the sense of the grievousness of sin. We have ceased to bother about sin. We have replaced agonizing for sin by organizing for material betterment. We have replaced the old story of man's fall by a theory that what happened was really a jump up-

ward! There are to-day multitudes who feel no more responsibility for their sins than they do for the colour of their hair. The story of Eve and the Serpent is now deemed to be but a parable in the dawn of history, and so dismissed. The sense of sin decreased as the mockery of the serpent theory increased. It is easy to mock; easy to show that there never were such persons as Aphrodite or Bacchus. But the question is—are there no such things? Though the origin of sin be veiled in the mists, the fact of sin remains, and its withering blight is still cast over humanity. And, if we read it aright, there has never been written a story more true to fact than the story of men's first sin. It is the story of every soul that God has made. The voice of the tempter is the voice that comes alluringly to every heart—take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry. It is the voice of the siren on the shore that calls the toilers at the dull mechanic oar to turn aside and surrender the wide ocean of peril and conflict for the still haven where the body is drugged with languor and physical delight. It is against that power that is ever threatening moral destruction that men are summoned

to wage a war in which there is no discharge.

It is the duty of every soldier to consider the might of his enemy. To underrate the forces arrayed against us is to court disaster. Though, to this end, it may help us to acquaint ourselves with the history of the struggles of men long ago with sin, yet it is only when we face sin as a reality in our own heart, that we realise the might of that grip from which we cannot escape. It is not by a measuring line stretching across the centuries, but by casting the plummet into the depths of our own hearts that we can measure the might of sin.

There, in our hearts, we find a constant warfare being waged: the flesh warring against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh. And He Who fashioned us has hung the mechanism on this so delicate a poise that on the victory of the spirit over the flesh depends the issue of the soul's enrichment or impoverishment. The animal knows nothing of this struggle, but its life is poor and mean. It gazes on a world of beauty and sees nothing but grass. Man gazes at the same landscape, but he sees colour, radiance, a world of splendour. In proportion as the spirit conquers

the flesh is the glory of the vision he sees. If the flesh conquers in the fight, the man sinks into the animal; if the spirit conquers, the man is enriched with the spoils of victory. Vision, inspiration, knowledge, goodness—these are the prizes of the conflict. To war against sin is thus to curb the tiger within us. The hour when man first heard the bugle-call summoning him to fight the animal within him and declined the conflict, was the hour of sin's entry into the world.

But sin, when traced to its source, is not merely the victory of the flesh over the spirit, of the animal over the man, for that is only its manifestation. The true source is in the man's will. We surrender to the flesh because we will it to be so. We may abhor ourselves for doing it; we do it because we love it. The true source of sin then is in the will of man setting itself in hostility to the will of God. God's will for man is that he should live the God-centred life and that he should ally himself with that purpose of God which is ever striving to evolve righteousness and goodness out of the tangled skeins of human life. But such an alliance demands toil, watchfulness,

self-denial even unto the subjugation of the flesh. And we prefer ourselves and the gratification of our low desires. God's will is that we should live lives of unselfishness, and find our happiness in bearing the burdens of our fellows. But we choose the life of self-interest, sacrificing the lives of others to our base cravings. Thus the seat of sin is in the will, and every manifestation of sin is selfishness.

## II

But the souls of men can never realise the heinousness of sin until they see it in the light of God's eternal purpose and its black shadow against the background of His holiness. This was ever the way in which the soul realised sin. It is when God becomes a reality to us that we are stung broad awake and see ourselves as rebels against His will. It was always thus. "I have heard of Thee with the hearing of the ear," declares Job; "but now mine eye seeth Thee and I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." The vision of God arises and the faltering lips of the prophet exclaims: "Woe is me! for I am undone; be-

cause I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." The moral passion for righteousness from which Christianity drew the power which enabled it to re-vitalise humanity was just this. Against the vision of the All-Holy God the eyes of men saw the heinousness of sin. It may sound strange in our ears when we hear the words: "When He shall come He shall convince the world of sin . . . because they believed not on me." The primary work of the Holy Spirit is to-day what it was at the beginning—to convince of sin. It was only when that conviction came that Christianity launched forth on that long campaign against sin whose end is not yet. We can trace the mental and spiritual processes by which the early Christians arrived at that conviction. For three years He was to them a Rabbi; for forty days He was but returned from the shadows of death to raise a material realm—to restore the Kingdom to Israel. But the revealing spirit of God comes, and they understand. The mists are swept away and they see. They envisage the beauty of His life,

seeing it so clearly that the conviction comes that He was of God. They could not separate what they saw in Him from the thought of God. The qualities which shone in His face—love, purity, tenderness, self-sacrifice stronger than death—were the qualities which must be of the very essence of God. God must have been in Him as He never was in mortal man. And yet, how did the world act towards Him? “They believed not,” and their unbelief nailed Him to a Cross. The Cross now shone luridly before their eyes as the symbol of all the forces of hostility to God—those forces that spurned the Holy One and cried “Away with Him.” For what was sin but this—the selfishness that so hardened the heart and blinded the eye that men could see no beauty in the pure and could mete out no measure save the Cross.

For the early Church, thus, the unbelief that raised the Cross was the measure of sin. And the sin of which it was the measure was just selfishness. For that was what stirred the implacable hatred of pharisee and priest and moved the Roman reluctantly to assent to the Cross. To the Pharisee whose conception of

religion was the directed life, the controlling of hands and feet and tongue by innumerable rules, He came and said that the directed life must be replaced by the God-filled life, and the fettered hand by the heart aflame with God. The Kingdom of God was within. But they would not have it. Such a teaching would be the end of their traditions and the overthrow of their dignity. So self cried: "Crucify Him." And He came to the priest and said that the blood of burnt offerings availed nothing, that what God yearned for was the purity of heart that hungered for righteousness, and He struck a blow at their ill-gotten gains by driving their merchandise out of the courts of the Father's house. And they saw nothing but the end of their power if this were allowed, and they cried "Crucify." For them the Roman had nought but contempt and he wanted to save the victim of their blinded hearts, until an appeal was made to his selfishness also. "If thou let this man go thou art not Cæsar's friend," they cried, and he foresaw an appeal to Rome and an enquiry which his life could not bear unscathed. And self said "Crucify." That mass of human self-

ishness, that blinded self-will, so shone in all its heinousness before the opened eyes of the early Christians that they spoke the word sin with a shudder, and had one cry on their lips: "What must we do to be saved?" Thus they came to realise, as they beheld sin in relation to the purity and holiness that could be only of God, that religion must ever have its rise in the heart convinced of sin. And what was true then is true to-day. If any man or nation say: "I have no conception of sin, nor do I realise myself to be a sinner," the Lord Jesus Christ passes that man or nation by, and He says, "I have nothing for you, nothing." And He cannot have, for He is just this: the Saviour from sin.

### III

What the world then needs to-day is just what it needed nineteen centuries ago, to be convinced of sin. If ever the world is to learn that lesson it is surely to-day. In that dawn long ago One Cross outside Jerusalem convinced those who saw it aright of sin. To-day ten million crosses gleam in the rank grass, where the flower of humanity lie buried, man-

gled and torn; and as the world contemplates these unnumbered Calvaries, surely it also will be convinced of sin. "The Boche is saving the world because he has shown what evil is," said a French officer to Rudyard Kipling at the front. If ever the world is to realise the horror of sin it must surely be there. For the Calvaries are everywhere.

Let one stand in the midst of that ruined civilisation and contemplate what he sees; and what he sees is just the fruitage of sin. Consider just one scene. In the centre of the dead town of Peronne stand the ruins of the parish church. The fallen roof lies along the nave, an undulating ridge from the west door to the high altar that lies buried under the debris. The organ wires hang loose in the wind in the west gallery. The sacred pictures are shreds, the statues of saints broken, and no sound is there but the singing of the birds. But on one pillar of a broken arch still stands a life-size effigy of the Christ. One hand has been broken; a splinter of shell has torn His side and grazed the pillar, revealing a vein of red in the stone. As you look, that wounded side seems to be bleeding. And the face of the

Christ looks out through the broken arches on the town where every house is a ruin, laid low by the retreating enemy. He sees the cradles in the rain; the little libraries, masses of pulp; and the scenes of human happiness and love as Acedama. And beyond the town He looks out on the fields which once waved with golden grain, where now the wind only stirs the weeds among which the white crosses gleam on the graves. Past these fields of death He looks to the north where the guns rumble and shallow graves are being dug ceaselessly. And as one gazes there come from the chambers of memory the words:

"Whose sad face on a cross sees only this,  
After the passion of a thousand years."

Nineteen hundred years of Christianity and this is what we have made of it! It is not the horror of war that the eyes behold: it is the horror of sin. For war is only the symptom of the hidden disease as raving is the symptom of fever. It is not the fault of the Christ; it is the crime of the world that refused to believe on Him. For these centuries His spirit has striven with the world. He has declared that

the only life God means for men is the life of love. He has pled with men declaring that there is only one way of conquering—love; that it is useless to conquer men's bodies unless you conquer their hearts; that it is futile to subjugate provinces when the subjugation means the loss of the love of men, the isolation of the conqueror in the midst of humanity from all that ennobles life. He has declared to each generation that love does not kill, that love does not say, "I am better than you, be thou my slave"; but that what love says is: "You are better than I am—let me carry your burden." But this road was too beautiful to be trodden by the gross feet of men. They chose the way not of the nailed hand but of the mailed fist—the way of hatred, of lust, of murder and of rapine. That is the source of the world's blood and tears. It is sin that blinded the eyes of men and hardened their hearts so that they refused to believe the Lord of Love or follow the Prince of Peace. Thus the world to-day is filled with the red harvest of sin.

If, to-day, under leaden skies, you listen in France to the sighing of the wind as it goes

wailing through the broken pillars and arches of ruined shrines, as it stirs the coarse grasses around white crosses that gleam over fields of death far as the eye can see, as it sighs and moans over trenches where the living lie in the slime under the shadow of the world's woe, as it sings its coronach through the roofless, rain-sodden rooms where desolation is seated by the rusty fireless grates that erstwhile warmed the hearts of men to joyous laughter, as it sweeps round playgrounds where no longer children shout in merriment, as it whines through broken, blasted stumps that erstwhile were verdant woods of gracious shade, with glades of greenness, what that wind whispers in your ear is this: "Behold what comes to men when they choose iniquity for their portion and spurn the Lord of love. This is the harvesting of sin!"

Not only has sin let loose this flood that has overwhelmed the world, but, now, it has achieved another triumph. It forbids the damming of that flood; it decrees that its devastation must go on. For that is what the answer of President Wilson to the Pope means. The Holy Father cried to men:

“Cease from this havoc, this holocaust of mutual destruction.” But the President replied that it could not cease because no man could trust the truth or honour of the enemy. Those who marched over broken treaties to the ruin of the world, would march over broken treaties again to the same ruin. To treat with them would only condone their crimes without securing the future. The sin of falsehood to which they had sold themselves made it impossible to make peace with them. Thus, to-day, sin holds the throne of the world. It has let loose the dogs of war; it, now, forbids their kennelling. And thus the world goes reeling to doom. Truly the world to-day is the apotheosis of sin triumphant.

#### IV

But the saddening fact confronts us that the world, though millions of Calvaries stand thus on the blasted earth, refuses still to be convinced of sin. It strives to diagnose every possible source of its misery—except sin; it seeks every remedy save the way of salvation from sin. Each day brings forth a new pan-

acea, a new society for the abolition of war. Some ex-Lord Chancellors and learned men formed such a society recently. These cave-dwellers do not ask: What would be the result, suppose they succeeded, by signatures on parchment, in abolishing war? It would only mean, the world being as it is, that humanity would plunge deeper than ever into the mire; that, this last terror removed, they would make the world a Sodom which would need another Dead Sea to cover its iniquity from the sight of heaven. There can be no way of ending war except the way of conquering sin. The way of death is to assuage the symptom while the disease is left to devour the fibres of life unchecked.

To-day the world is blind to its true malady—its refusal to believe on the Lord of love—because the world has been stricken by the plague of Pharisaism. And of all the manifestations of sin that is the most ugly. For other sins, sins of hot blood and of the eager spirit, the Lord had only infinite pity; but against Pharisaism His anger blazed into white heat and His words became as sharpened swords: “Woe unto you, Scribes and Phari-

sees, hypocrites." The hardest of all sins to combat is this. There is good hope that the publican may seek after God; but the Pharisee making broad his phylacteries, and thanking heaven that he is not as these others, has no need to seek anywhere.

Never in all its history was the world stricken by this plague of Pharisaism as it is to-day. Europe is perishing, reeling in its own blood, but nobody is at fault. The Germans are convinced that they did not begin the war; they are only waging on foreign soil a campaign in defence of their homes and all they hold dear. Even their rulers, who decreed the war, protest passionately that they did not begin it; and such is the capacity of the human heart for self-deception, that doubtless they are quite sincere. France knows that she did not begin this war—that France all unprepared, with its manhood desiccated. Austria proclaims that she did not begin the war—she was ready to arbitrate to the last. And Russia, convulsed with the pangs of dissolution, holds fast the belief that she did not begin the war. The other Powers of the Continent certainly did not begin it, for only later

were they sucked into the vortex of its devouring flood. And of one thing, at least, we in these Islands know for sure, and that is that we did not begin the war. A nation that could only land a handful of soldiers on the Continent was not likely to seek the blind arbitrament of war. So far from causing the war, we entered upon it reluctantly, impelled only by the spirit of chivalry and Christian duty that would not suffer us to stand by and see the small nations of Europe perishing beneath the heel of tyranny. Thus, for three dread years, Europe has thanked high heaven for her sinlessness, and Britain has had a special litany of her own in which she proclaimed to heaven and earth that she at least "tore up no scraps of paper." The spirit of self-righteousness has conquered the world, and on the altar of pharisaism humanity has offered up awful hecatombs. Look where one will, one can scarcely see in Europe to-day any nation that feels any need for repentance. There is scarcely any material left which the spirit of God can kindle into cleansing and renewing flame.

We are not concerned with the guilt of other

nations, and we would not condone their crimes. To their own God they stand or fall; and it does no good to confess the sins of others except ministering to our own self-righteousness. What we have to ask is: are we really so innocent and guiltless? "Yes," you say; "we have torn no scraps of paper; we are waging a holy war; we have done nothing but right and fair and what Christian duty required." Surely it is time that we awoke from the drugging of this litany of our sinlessness. "Tore up no scraps of paper!" Why is that a virtue? Because the scrap of paper was the law of truth and honesty and we observed its precepts. But whose law is it, this of truth and honesty? God's law, of course—and it is its divine source that makes its tearing up so heinous. And the great Law-Giver proclaims that we, who honoured our word, are pleasing and innocent in His sight.

If there were only one law of God with one precept enjoining honesty in international relationship, then our vaunting of innocence would not be amiss—though the man who proclaims loudly his righteousness suggests that

he needs to proclaim it! But by what right do we out of the laws of God select one and found on that one alone a ritual of self-righteousness? The laws of God are a unity; to observe one if we break the others, does not make us right with God. Let us think of other laws of God—written also on paper. There is the law of love. Have we as a nation—the greatest on earth—striven to commend that law to other nations and sought by our policy to make them realise that above armaments and rulers there is another King, one Jesus? Have we striven to make that law operative even within our own borders? Let our class warfare and the chasm between our slums and our mansions answer the question. Methinks we have torn up that scrap of paper. There is a law that righteousness alone shall fill the hungry heart. Have we observed it? Let the hundreds of thousands wounded by their sins answer the question; let the race threatened at its source answer the question. There is a law of sacrifice that they only gain their life who are willing to lose it. How did we observe it during long years? We hold the fourth of the world's surface, with most of its

wealth, under our flag, but we held it by an army equal in size to that of Switzerland. And why? Because we would not sacrifice pleasure and ease to duty. We mocked the prophets who summoned us to leave the fields of our pleasure for the fields of hardness. By refusing to prepare to defend our wealth we invited the spoilers. But we are innocent, and tore up no scraps of paper! There is a law that it does not profit to gain a world and lose the soul. We gained the world, building up an empire such as the sun never saw. Did we do it merely by accident—in moments of absentmindedness? Did we do it for commerce and wealth and greatness or for the betterment of the soul of the world? Let the trade in rum on the coasts of Africa, in part answer the question. There is a law: do not steal; did we observe it? Did we not rear a civilisation on the basis of individualistic competition which massed riches largely by dishonesty? There is a law that men should bear one another's burdens. Have we recast it so that it reads: share ye one another's bonuses? There is a law enjoining the Sabbath day to be kept holy. Have we observed it in letter

or in spirit? But, however we may have transgressed the laws of the Unseen, we are conscious of one fact that sustains us amid the fury and the onslaught: we are righteous, we are innocent of the blood of the slain. "England still remains to be taken out of the stupor of self-satisfaction," declared Admiral Beatty in January, 1916. And the armour of that self-satisfaction is still without a crevice through which the arrow of conviction can pierce. There has been in England a mission of Repentance and Hope, but the word repentance stuck in the throats of the prophets. They explained it away; there was no repentance called for in regard to the war. The Holy Spirit was directed that this matter was outside His province. The result has been that there has been no repentance and no dawning of hope. And thus the problem of how to convince a righteous world of sin is one that overwhelms the heart.

## V.

The grimmest fact in all the history of the world is this fact of sin. The history of

humanity is mainly the history of sin. It has dug the grave for empires and civilisation in the past; it is digging the grave of empires to-day. Stand amid the ruins of great capital cities, now briar-heaps—in Tyre, or Carthage, or Babylon—or amid the vestiges of the glory that was Greece—and ask what worked this woe? And the only answer is sin. To-day the might of sin has ravaged the world, and swept well-nigh the whole of humanity into a maelstrom of blood. It has strewn the streets of every city in the world with the wreckage of broken, shattered lives. The horrors of peace are more awful than even the horrors of war. (It is more dangerous to be a child in the slums of London or Glasgow than to be a soldier in the trenches in Flanders.) It has turned even the gospel of love into that loathsome Pharisaism that knows not the canker from which the heart is perishing. As the soul contemplates this dread and unconquered foe, despair falls upon it. This is a problem that demands the intervention of God. It is to this warfare that God calleth His sons. It is vain to conquer the enemy without if the nation fall into the clutches of degeneration within.

It is for this warfare that every soldier who would serve and save his race and the world must gird himself. It is a warfare harder far than that against flesh and blood, and in it there is no discharge. God alone can win the victory in this age-long fight. But God cannot win it unless we enlist and fight under His banner. It is great to die for England; it is greater far to live for England—and for the world. The only way of living for the world is to fight sin.

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# REDEMPTION

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## CHAPTER III

### REDEMPTION

**I**T was a frequent and striking experience at divine service amongst soldiers to observe the response that was given to preaching upon the Cross. Not that the vast majority seemed to be well instructed upon this so great matter. Somewhat elementary statements came to the ears of many with surprising freshness. But it was manifest that the story of a Divine Being, Who, though innocent, was willing to die and, if pain was necessary for deliverance, was prepared to endure it, was a story to which our men were ready to listen; and thoughts of God learned therefrom were thoughts on which they were impelled to ponder. No hymn was sung more genuinely than, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross." Especially that great verse which begins:

"See from His head, His hands, His feet,  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down,"

was rendered in a spirit of wistful devotion that was quite unmistakable. I have heard a great audience, representing many regiments and types in our Army, singing it softly, unaccompanied, often with bent heads, as if it were too great a thing to be noisy about; and then coming, with a sudden impulse of reality, to the closing dedication:

“Were the whole realm of nature mine  
That were an offering far too small.”

Many times that hymn has been sung by easy, half-asleep, congregations, in an atmosphere at sore variance with the self-loss of the words. But these lads were about to venture their lives; if not for Christ, at least for what they believe to be right. And it adds something to such a hymn when, in it, *morituri salutant*.

## I

Now, there are some regions of Christian teaching in which men who have faced death in this war have direct contributions to make. For instance, upon certain aspects of the Christian ideal of conduct they have the right

to speak, and we have the duty to listen. But I do not think that we need expect them directly to teach us upon the subject of the Cross, except in so far as their own tragic experiences, and the manner in which they bear them, throw light on the mystery of deliverance through the suffering of the innocent. It is rather for Christian people, who have time and opportunity to meditate, to make a statement of what understanding they are reaching concerning the central fact of their faith through the spectacle of the pain of their defenders. And we may be confident that the closer we are brought to the facts of this war, the more we are flung back on the teaching of the Cross, unless we are to be without hope, and almost without God in the world.

In Scripture, the Redeeming work of our Lord is presented to us in two aspects. On the one hand, it is objective—the paying of a debt, which we ourselves cannot pay: and on the other it is subjective—the recreating of our minds by the spectacle of love in pain because of us. About the latter of these there never has been any difficulty. If we permit the thought of our Lord, buffeted, scorned, spat

upon, mocked again, enduring the scandal and the agony for the freeing of the race of which we are members, to grip our minds, then shame, gratitude and the response to the heroic combine to make us better men. But as regards the former, many had difficulty, and there can be no question that the teaching of blood shed for the remission of sins, and Life given as a ransom for many, was becoming an attenuated doctrine in the pulpits of Britain.

## II

And now this war has broken upon us, and given us furiously to think. Certain facts are made plain. Chiefly, that evil committed in this world must be paid for: yes, and to the last farthing. The days in which men compass wrong pass away and are perished: but the evil that they do lives after them. The record of it is kept, and its consequences are cast most surely in somebody's teeth. The exceeding smallness of the grinding of the mills of God is a re-discovery of the days of our pain. If the hairs of our head are all numbered by our Heavenly Father, so are

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the faintest quivers of our base desire by Him Who is righteous altogether.

All of which is a just principle. "The oysters are eaten and put down in the bill," says somebody. And that applies to all life. Against such a rule no man can complain. It is fair dealing. But here we come up against another fact. The man that does the evil, or eats the oysters, is not always the man that pays. The fathers, not infrequently, partake of sour grapes and thereby secure that the children's teeth are set on edge. And this strikes us as not quite so adequate to the situation. But the soldiers come to our aid: for they have discovered the fact, and continually with startling cheerfulness assent to it, that we are bound up in the bundle of life; that there is, if you prefer it, such a thing as the solidarity of the race: that God acts on the assumption that the human race is a family. And there is nothing revolting to the feeling, if one member of a family shall be ready to meet the obligations of his errant brother and set him on his feet again to play a man's part in the world.

## III

In this war there is nothing plainer than that the burdens are unequally distributed, and that it is in the nature of things that such inequality must continue. A large number are at home—old folk, babies, invalids, munition-workers, miners and those that govern; a large number are behind the lines—transport, Y. M. C. A. workers, and doctors in base hospitals; and in the actual front there stand the fighting men themselves, and especially the greatly-to-be-praised, but often half-forgotten, foot-slogging infantry, who go over the top, and encounter machine-gun nests, and die, and only grumble about the little things. On them the fist of war descends with its real savagery: they, together with the Navy and the Flying Men, endure its intimate hardness. But these things must needs be. Only a small proportion in modern war can know its final horror. The masses of men behind the lines are essential to ultimate victory: the non-combatant section left at home would only be a nuisance if they were poured into a front

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line trench. The burden of the struggle is laid, of necessity, on the few, fit, strong and young, who are called and chosen, because of their strength and youth, for this high purpose.

Now, there is a fact on which the minds of reflective soldiers fasten. Some are fit to bear the burden and to pay the debt, and some are not. *Why* that should be so, they cannot say. That it is so, they see with their own eyes. Consequently, a doctrine that speaks of the burden of a whole race being placed on the shoulders of One, because He is alone capable of supporting it, is in nowise strange to them. Far from that, it brings the divine nature close to them, if the divine makes assent to the same strange principle that is imposed on them.

Our men might speak thus: "We are all one. If one suffers, another suffers; if one is ready to endure, he makes it better for the others. The world will never recover, unless some are ready to endure. But if some are thus willing, then good will come to the world. Let us be amongst those through whom good may come. Carry on."

## IV

Now, out of such reflections as these, what thoughts come concerning the central fact of Christianity? This, first, that Christ, as the Elder Brother of the human family, identifies Himself with it, and, as such, pays its debt. And, thereby, He contributes to the ultimate redemption of the various members of the family. For it is only when a man can think that his debt is paid that he can stand up upon his feet and have that speech with God which makes him strong to live. We are willing to listen to theologians who will write for us upon the objective atonement.

But, further, we are concerned that the Cross of Christ shall be made contemporaneous. We have no doubt about Christ. He was a burden-bearer, the chosen amongst the chosen, the called amongst the called, pre-ordained before the foundation of the world—we can never question Him. He made the fullest assent that can be made to the principle that it is expedient that one should die for the people. His atoning death is clear to see.

But what about God? Does He sit in cold security in the eternal places, watching Jesus give His life for the world's peace, observing soldiers die with a smile because it is going to be "a better place for the kiddies afterwards," with His ineffable calm undisturbed and His heart untouched? If so, is God as divine as Jesus? It is a perplexity to the soldier mind. But I have seen these same soldiers lift their eyes and give strict attention when it was pointed out that the glory of God that shined in the face of Jesus Christ was precisely the glory of self-giving that Jesus showed on the Cross; and that the Cross is set eternally in the heart of the Most High. A message that it is the *Crucified* Christ that unfolds God to us is a message soldiers always listen to. They will worship a God Who is the supreme burden-bearer of the Universe. They will worship, in short, the eternal Christ-in-God. But I doubt if they will worship any God but that.

## V

One further suggestion is worth pondering. If the Cross of Christ is the supreme unveiling

of the heart of the Eternal, what is its relation to human sorrow as we know it? Does it illuminate man as well as God? I think it does—and in this way.

It has been observed that mankind can be divided into two classes—and they are the only two that matter—the burden-bearers and the burden-creators. These are the real sheep and goats. And the worst of it is that all of us belong in some part to both sides. But some of us belong more to one side than to another; and thus settle our destinies. At any rate, we can distinguish the two classes sharply in idea. To the one belong all those who make life more difficult for their brethren, and make the enterprise of believing in Jesus Christ more severe; to the other, belong all those who ease the pains of their fellow-pilgrims. Profiteers, Kaisers, Graspers-after-Power, Seducers, Lustful Persons, and the merely pitiably selfish belong to the former class; Reformers, Martyrs, and women who bravely keep the home fires burning belong to the latter. And the latter bear the cross; the former make its bearing necessary. Between the two classes the clash is definite. The one

works for God, and the other against Him. If a man decides to line his own pockets by paying a wage that makes it much more profitable for his women employees to become prostitutes he is a burden-creator; and somebody has to pay his bill to eternal justice. If a woman decides that she can do nothing to better herself, and that her life is hard, but that she is going to make the best home she knows how and keep smiling about it, she is a burden-bearer, and is "filling up that which is lacking of the sufferings of Christ." An amazing text that, which gives a great dignity to a considerable number of Christian washer-women in Britain. Any innocent suffering, bravely borne, is a filling-up of that which is lacking. Any innocent sufferer, who endures suffering with courageous patience, is raised by Christ Himself into the proudest position in all the world—the position of a sharer in His Cross.

Ah! it is true that none could bear the burden that He bore except Himself. His cup none could drink—not even the disciple who lay on His breast. But His Spirit could be in as many as believed on Him—and is shown a thousandfold on earth to-day, in sol-

diers who dare death to bring a better world, in women who endure pain to keep a happy home for the children they bear. It is a great thing, the Cross of Christ. It illumines the heart of God, and makes humble people noble. And it stands as a constant appeal and challenge to us all. Do we bear burdens or create them? As we can answer that question, we stand or fall at last.

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WHAT GARRISONS THE HEART

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## CHAPTER IV

### WHAT GARRISONS THE HEART

**T**HERE is in the hearts of all men a sense of the Divine, dumb and sub-conscious, maybe, but there. The cry of the soul cannot be silenced, and that cry is for God. The question beside which all others pale into insignificance, is this: "Where can I find God?" Is His abode in the abysses of space? Is He infinite in the sense of being infinitely removed? If that be the case, we are left to our lonely struggle and to our orphaned state. The answer that Jesus Christ gives is this: "The kingdom of heaven is within you." God is to be found in the hidden depths of our own hearts. To find Him we have to sink the shaft into our own personalities. Not outside of us but within us we shall find the divine Ruler—the Source and End of life.

## I

This is the great and culminating truth that Christianity revealed to men. It was only when the disciples realised this on the day of Pentecost that they understood the Master whom they had hitherto blindly followed. Until that hour of vision and inspiration they could make nothing of Jesus Christ; He was but a Rabbi with whom they ate and drank and whose words filled them with wonder. Up to the last they thought only of His establishing an earthly kingdom, and they disputed as to who should have the thrones of greatest honour judging the tribes of Israel. Even when He returned from the shadow of death it was the same. The question which seemed to them the most urgent at the last was: "Wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" A temporal kingdom based on legions seemed to them the only possible Kingdom of God on earth. Had there been nothing beyond the Cross and the Resurrection, there would have been no Christianity upon earth to-day.

In all great work there is the flash of inspiration—the Spirit of God. The difference between the man who paints sign-boards and the artist who makes beauty live, is just that the one has been touched by the spirit of genius and the other not. It is, then, in no way strange to be told that religion has its source in the spirit of inspiration. It was when the disciples received the Spirit of God that they understood. They began by following a Rabbi, now their eyes saw clearly, and they recognised that He was God-filled. As they thought of Him they could not separate Him from God and the thought of God. What He was—love, purity, compassion, self-sacrifice—they felt that God must also be. And the Spirit of God that abode in Him now came and dwelt in them. The kingdom that He came to establish could no longer be thought of as a kingdom of this world. It was a kingdom invisible in the heart, transcending and including all the faculties of the will—a kingdom compared to which the empire of Cæsar was but dust. It was when they realised this that there came to them the power that lifted them up above their weakness and

their fears. Timorous peasants who were as quivering aspens, were transmuted into steel, and the Church moved out from behind closed doors and launched its great campaign for the conquest of the world. Only men who knew themselves to be the temples of God, the instruments of His will, could have engaged on an enterprise such as that which was inconceivable except to Omnipotence. Thus, the conquering power of Christianity is the realisation of the indwelling God. The bed-rock of the Church is the Holy Spirit. "God dwelleth in you" is religion's greatest word.

## II

We sometimes shrink from all teaching regarding the Holy Spirit, for the way of His working passes our understanding. But were we able to understand with mathematical precision the ways of the Unseen, God would no longer be the supreme desire of our hearts for He would be finite like ourselves. "A God who is defined and definable is a God who has ceased to be." And the ways of that God Who is not one infinity but a multitude of

infinities, must be beyond the grasp of our minds. It is by a faculty deeper than reason, through the moving of the Spirit in the depths of our sub-conscious self, that we know that He is and that we are not alone.

Though we cannot hope, while we are yet imprisoned in the body of sense, to comprehend the ways of God, there are yet many things regarding the Holy Spirit which, if we consider them, will bring the manner of His working out of the region of the super-normal into that of every-day experience. When we read of the day of Pentecost we are apt to be repelled as if we were reading a tale of some superheated imagination. It seems alien to all we know—nebulous, mythical, and abnormal. But it is not a tale that sprang from neurotic minds. The revelation of the indwelling God that then flashed on the souls of men is in line with the normal growth of human knowledge and power.

For it was not a new power that was then brought for the first time to bear upon men. The Holy Spirit had ever been with men, striving with them, flashing revelation on the soul of prophets and seers, and moving the hearts

of men to seek after God. What happened was that the fullness of His power was revealed and the hearts of men were brought into unison with God. It happened then as has happened with all the power of God which men have been unable to use until the hour of revelation came. The world quivered from the beginning with the power of electricity, but men only shrank with terror before it as they heard the rumbling of heaven's artillery and saw the flash of the lightning that smote and killed. But at last a day came when the secret of that power was flashed on the mind of Faraday and its laws were discovered. And then that power which hitherto was unused and valueless became the servant of man. Cities were ere long illumined by it and messages flashed round the world. In the spiritual world that, also, was what happened when Jesus Christ revealed to men the working of the Holy Spirit. He took the veil from off the face of God's spiritual energy. He was the discoverer of the laws of the soul. He established a contact between the soul and God, so that through prayer and the ordinances of the Church, the energy of God was communi-

cated to men. The power that aforesaid was available only for the great souls that saw the vision, became now the possession of all who would receive. Peasants and slaves, shepherds and toilers in the mines, were so brought into touch with God that they were lifted out of themselves. Though they were but the servants of the will of others ere this great experience came, now they essayed tasks that were previously unthinkable. The power in which they confronted every task was the spirit that enabled them to say: "We are not the hirelings of men; we are the sons of God." It is true of religion as of all things, that nothing of worth can ever be done without inspiration. "Nothing great in science," wrote Huxley, "has ever been done by men, whatever their powers, in whom the divine afflatus of the truth-seeker was wanting." There is nothing more mysterious about the Holy Spirit than there is about the sources of "Paradise Lost."

### III

In nothing was the working of the Holy Spirit more remarkable than in the courage

that He inspired in the hearts of these men. There came to these early Christians a power that transformed them. They who formerly cowered before authority now confronted opposition without a tremor. "We must obey God rather than men" was the new voice of defiance on their lips. And that has been one of the great fruits of the Spirit of God in all ages. In the hearts of Christians the Spirit of God has inspired a courage that never failed.

We can realise this great fruit of the Spirit when we consider the way in which Jesus Christ confronted the world. On Him the Spirit of God descended in fullness of power and the fruit of the Spirit was courage. If His gentleness be the wonder of history, yet that face that could melt with tenderness was, when the need arose, set like a flint. He manifested His courage in defying the conventions of His day. The good man could not then consort with publicans and sinners, but He defied the canons of His day and He sat down with the outcasts at the feast of life. Any man can stand up to his enemies; the proof of courage is when a man can stand up to his friends.

This was what He did. When His friends tried to force on Him an earthly kingdom He defied them, though the defiance meant their leaving Him solitary. It needs true courage to deliberately disperse one's followers, and to silence their hosannas. When He faced His enemies His voice never faltered as He declared the judgment of God: "Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees." When the end drew near He set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem, and He strode toward the Cross with His disciples lagging behind, their opposition awed into silence by the light of unconquerable resolve shining in His eyes. He meets His appointed end with head erect, refusing to abate His claims. Though witnessing to the truth meant the Cross, He bore His witness to the end. Jesus Christ is the embodiment of that courage that dies for the difference between right and wrong. And what He was in the world, His followers have been in the world.

When the Holy Spirit came to His disciples they were endued with the same high courage. They, too, defied death, and sang the song of victory amid the flames. All ages are aglow

with this fruit of the Spirit. "Be strong, Polycarp, and play the man," was the cry of a Christian to the aged saint in the day of his trial. "Eighty-six years have I served Christ," answered Polycarp to his judge, "and He has never wronged me, how can I now speak evil of my King and Saviour?" And so he died. Our hearts still thrill as we read the words of Ignatius on his way to his martyrdom: "Come fire and cross; come crowds of wild beasts; come tearings and manglings; wracking of bones and hacking of limbs; come cruel tortures of the devil, only let me attain to Jesus Christ." It has ever been the same. The conquests of Christianity have ever been through men to whom Jesus Christ has appealed on the side of their strength, and whose hearts His Spirit has fired with high resolve. The Christian army is not an ambulance corps but a storming battalion.

To picture Jesus Christ as the "meek and suffering Saviour" as Mr. Wells has portrayed Him is to be ignorant of what He really was and is. If Christianity were only submission, there would have been no Christianity. If Jesus Christ had ended His work in the self-

sacrifice of the Cross there would have been no Church. Christianity has conquered thus far because Jesus Christ has breathed into men the living, ardent, venturesome, self-sacrificing spirit that scorns death and laughs at danger. By ever refusing to submit to evil, by ever fighting against wrong, Christianity has won its triumphs. The fruit of the Spirit is not submission to men, it is submission to God, and an undaunted courage that defies men.

#### IV

In our day the spirit of courage has fired the hearts of men with an ardour that has endured misery such as the world has never seen. The virtue which the soldier prizes most is this virtue of courage. But often he is only dimly conscious that courage is the fruit of the Spirit of God.

In the twilight of a Sunday evening a wounded soldier began to talk to his neighbour lying near him of this. And what he said of his own experiences may be taken as representative of what multitudes have experienced in these days.

“Every man,” said the soldier, “knows his own experience best. When my time came, I was in a blue funk. We were to go over the parapet in an hour. The guns rent the air into shreds and the earth into shards. The world was convulsed with crumbling earth and splintered shell. On the men in the trench there fell a stillness. Through the roar as of a world passing away two or three slept peacefully. Their accounts with the Unseen were perhaps already balanced or they did not know of any account. But the rest were still. When the barrage lifted in front and went on, they had to leap into the open and follow. . . . Each man knew what his chance was worth, and each in the secret of his soul called upon his God. . . . And, though I am not a religious man, I tried hard to visualise God, as I prayed. I did not ask for safety or for my life, for that seemed to me unfair. One must play the game. But I prayed for what I needed most. I prayed for courage. I looked at the men and it gripped my soul that I might fail them. I had only one word rising in the stillness of the soul:—‘Courage; Lord! give me courage.’ But my lips were

ashen, and the courage I asked for came not. The minutes were passing, and I quailed. Was fear to conquer me? My heart cowered with the fear of fear.

“Then, like a pistol shot, sudden and sharp, a thought came to me. I changed my prayer. I asked no longer for courage; I asked only to be delivered from the fear of fear. If only I were set free from the terror of becoming a coward I might prove my manhood. ‘Save me from the fear of being afraid,’ was now my prayer. And a wonderful thing happened. I felt all at once a sense of an Unseen Power, in whose hand I was. There rang in my ears words which I once knew but had forgotten:—‘My Grace is sufficient for thee.’ Like the snapping of a string that opens a door I was set free—as a bird from the snare of a fowler. The barrage, continuing or lifting, was nothing to me. Suddenly the guns ceased; there was a silence as of death, and we went over the parapet. But it was not the man of an hour ago, but a new and different man, that went over the parapet in my person.”

This is only the experience of multitudes in the hour of their trial. In the face of over-

whelming difficulties, when heart and flesh fail, a door opens in the sub-conscious self, and the heart is filled with the might of the indwelling God. It was to that God in his heart that the soldier made his appeal; and he realised the might of the Holy Spirit in the fortifying of his will. The same officer narrated another and similar experience:

“We were moving up a communication trench to support another regiment. The trench had been pounded by our artillery and then by the Boche until it was scarcely a trench at all. In it were many dead, both theirs and ours. Everybody was too busy to bury them, almost too busy to notice them. In time you get callous—you’ve got to. The Boche began to shell heavily with a high explosive—‘whizbangs’ (a most annoying shell)—and machine guns from various points swept the trench. You can stand anything if you are on the move, but a stoppage occurred in front, and we had to halt. The trench was overcrowded. Death was everywhere—under the feet the putrefying dead, and in the air and all around, death. And then the barrage settled down on the part of the trench where I

was. It was horrible. It wasn't my first experience—but it was by far the worst. And you never get used to that hell.

“It was then that my queer experience came. I happened to look into the face of a brother officer (a white man if ever there was one), and, with more bravado than merriment, I screwed my lips into what I hoped was a smile. And in that act there arose within me an unconscious appeal to the Highest. That appeal was urgent. Though I am not a religious man I believe certain things—the things that matter. My appeal was that the Power over all and within me should back me up in the effort that produced that smile. Instantly something happened. . . . Shells still burst all around, with smoke and an incredible roar everywhere. The crack, crack of machine guns until the air was a sheet of bullets; the earth blasted and thrown high into the air—that was what girt me around. But these things were no longer real. As a dreamer awakes from a ghastly nightmare, and, while the horror is still upon him, is suddenly comforted by the knowledge that it was only a dream, so, all at once, the danger and

horror of the trench became unreal. *I* was the reality. *I* could not be destroyed. *I* was filled with a great comfort. During these few moments (that probably did not last much longer than *I* smiled) *I* was raised above destruction. . . . It made a great difference to me.”

What enables men to face horrors such as were never faced on earth before is the undaunted courage that God inspires in the heart. This is the dumb, unconscious religion of every soldier. In the great crisis the heart is garrisoned by God. Kipling expresses the same truth in the words he puts into the lips of an Indian soldier:—“Fighting goes on in the sky, on earth, and under the earth. Such a fighting is rarely vouchsafed anyone to behold. Yet, if one reflects upon God it is no more than rain on a roof.” When the soul is endued with the consciousness of God, so that the human will becomes the instrument of the Divine will, then the soul is master. “Tremblest thou, O my body,” said Turenne, as he quivered on the eve of conflict; “if thou but knewest the dangers into which I shall carry thee to-day, thou wouldst tremble still more.”

And that is the victory of Christianity; the triumph of the spirit over the flesh. Never was that victory achieved in the measure in which our eyes behold it. Victory is of God because the spirit of courage and self-sacrifice is of God.

## V

In the realisation of the presence of God in the heart there is to be found not only the source of courage but of all power. What man needs, above all, is power to do the right—to be righteous. There comes to us again and again the vision of the right; we have behind us a heredity that has fought for the right; there is in us the witness of conscience to the right; the atmosphere in which we were reared is an atmosphere impregnated with ideals of right; and when we come face to face with Jesus Christ we cannot but confess that He is the right. But what we lack is the power to do the right. We may as well be told to clasp the stars because we see them, as to do the right because we see it.

It is here that Christianity in the fullness of

its power meets our dire need. It brings the revelation of the perfect life in Jesus Christ—a revelation that would only fill us with despair if there were nothing but a revelation. But Christianity does more. It brings the power wherewith we can realise in our hearts and lives that perfect ideal. Through the spirit of inspiration there comes the power to live and act. All the faculties of mind and will are quickened. When the heart receives that power, then the man arises and sets him to fight. The evil within him and the evil without him, he tramples under his feet. He is no longer as a ship becalmed, helpless, and borne by every tide whither it would not; he is now as a ship with full-spread sails, in the track of the trade-winds, steering straight to her port. This is the testimony of every soul that has ventured upon God: "I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me." When we can say that, we have entered on the fullness of the Christian heritage. The spiritual forces are within us working out truth and righteousness, purity of heart and cleanness of speech. We are each, so far as in us lies, making the world righteous.

So far, then, from Christianity being submission, quietness, or passive endurance, it is dynamic force working out righteousness in the midst of the world's evil. If Christianity were really submission it never could appeal to the heroic. The young manhood of the world will be captured by the dynamics and not by the mechanics of religion. It will be in the future as it was in the past. "How did Christianity arise and spread among men?" asked Carlyle; "was it by well arranged systems of mechanics? Not so! It came in the mystic deeps of man's soul, and was spread abroad by the preaching of the Word by simple, altogether natural and individual effort." When again we shall apprehend God in the mystic deep of our hearts, when we understand and realise the words, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," then will Christianity again arise and conquer. For men will be once more endued with power.

## VI

In the midst of a conflict waged by material forces it is difficult to realise that we are really

waging a spiritual warfare, and that the ultimate issue depends on the soul. And yet, if we but think, we shall find it to be so.

The power that enabled us, all unprepared, to rush into the breach, and through the sacrificing of our blood to save France, was the power of the soul. When those who were pledged to protect Belgium trampled her underfoot, we rushed to her help just because we felt that truth and righteousness impelled us, and ever since then our dead have been to us martyrs in a righteous war. It was for the Christian ideal that we drew the sword. It was a spiritual power that impelled us to war against brutality and the ideal of Odin.

The war is being gained by spiritual forces. Doubtless the blockade of Germany's coasts is strangling her vitality; but there is a more terrible blockade—an isolation more asphyxiating. And that all-destroying isolation is the manner in which Germany has isolated herself from all the moral and spiritual ideals that enrich the life of nations. Nation after nation have seen the ideal of righteousness arise before their unveiled eyes, and have cut themselves off from fellowship with her. To be isolated

from the ideals of freedom and justice—that truly is death. And the armaments of the world that are being steadily massed for the final destruction of the evil that threatened the world's soul are only the instruments wherewith the outraged soul of the nations is to execute final judgment. When Germany defied the spiritual power that works righteousness in the universe, she doomed herself to destruction.

All the forces that are now converging for the destruction of the power that trampled on truth, are at the core spiritual. It looks as if everything turned on shells and machine guns. But the shells and guns are only materialised spirit. For what turns the iron and the explosives into shells is the spirit of the people. The materials are there; the question is—can these materials be turned into munitions fast enough to save the world? The heart of the nation has answered the question. Men and women converted their life-blood into munitions. In the piled-up munition dumps we can see the spirit of a nation—its very soul incarnate in iron. Shells are a product of the Spirit, and the war is being decided by spirit-

ual forces. Behind everything, through everything, is the power of the Spirit. And that is how the issue is sure. For these ideals from which the armies of freedom draw their determination to conquer, are for ever being renewed by the very life of God—by every breath of His Spirit.

## VII

If the European civilisation which has been passing in the smoke of the howitzer guns for these three years is not at last to be utterly destroyed, the soul of the nations has to be re-enforced. And that can only be done by the Spirit of God filling the hearts of men.

Let any man consider the miserable condition to which the world has been reduced and he will realise that there is only one way of salvation, and that is through the soul. We have come to the day of ruin because men were seized by the obsession that human progress lay along the road of brain development. They set themselves to conquer the forces of nature, and in conquering deemed themselves gods. But their conquests are now turned into

instruments of destruction and the world has become Aceldama. We conquered the air, and lo! death and destruction are rained upon cities; the joyous laughter of children is turned into cries of despair and innocent babes into mangled heaps. Let men continue along this road, and as we contemplate the ultimate end of this merciless and bloody tyranny we have created for ourselves, we can only gasp with horror. We can foresee capital cities laid in ruins with the shrines of God given over to the bats, and the remnant of the people cowering in cellars and sewers. We conquered the depths of the sea, only to hear the moans of drowning women and children as great ships sink into darkness. The highways of the sea have become the ways of death, and we conjured from the vasty deep the spectre of hollow-eyed famine. We conquered gravitation, sending our high explosive shells hurtling over twenty miles, and behold even the bowels of the earth and the deep dug-outs are no longer a safety for men driven to burrow underground. We have come to this, that man is being mangled and annihilated by his own inventions; each triumph over the forces of na-

ture is another step towards his ruin. Not long ago our walls were eloquent with placards beseeching us to avoid extravagance of dress. These placards glowed with patriotic vision. They must have been issued by men who had experienced a moment of self-revelation in which they realised that sackcloth and ashes are the only raiment befitting human beings that have allowed themselves to be conquered by their conquests.

There can only be one deliverance from the tyranny we have created for ourselves, and that is through the soul. Deliverance will come when humanity has learned the lesson that the development of material power without the development of soul to control it, can only bring misery to men. That is the lesson we are slow to learn. There is little sign of our statesmen and politicians being even willing to learn it. They plan plans for the future, but there is no word of the soul. They propose to usher in the millennium with an Education Bill that adds a hundred or two more hours to the annual period of teaching. We are to be saved by more brain development, by a little more of that science that has

blessed the world with poison gas! And there is never so much as a hint of God and the soul! They are to put an end to war by treaties and signatures on parchment, and typewriters, and they never realise that treaties mean nothing unless the persons who sign them have a soul alit with loyalty to the truth. How the angels must weep over man in his self-made blindness.

Power such as man has now developed can only mean ruin, so long as that power is in the hands of hatred, jealousy, greed and ambition. Well may the world tremble for the future, as it sees the instruments of destruction multiply in these hands. But there is a hand that can be trusted to wield that power, and that hand is the hand of love. For in love there are no boundaries and no kingdoms, and no alien races. Love never ravishes or devastates or destroys. The love that is Christianity knows neither Jew nor Greek, Briton nor German. In that love we all are brothers. The only possible way of salvation lies through the world receiving the gospel of love, and submitting to its law. Then that power which in the hand of hatred has strewn the world with

wreckage, will pour healing and help and loveliness upon the weary and heavy-laden—will usher in the morn of God.

And there is only one way to that blessed consummation. It is that which multitudes of Christians have experienced: even “the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” When the world will turn to God and seek after that Spirit—the morning of its deliverance shall dawn. And it will not dawn till then. And the glorious thing about it all is this—that whereas no coinage can buy the inspiration of genius or the sense of beauty, or the vision and faculty of the seer, yet this, the greatest of all, the inspiration of goodness, the power that can turn sinners into saints, is given free to all who ask. The words of the Master are sure: “Ask and it shall be given you.” If we are visited by no rapture, and know no power, it is because we do not ask.

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THE GOOD MAN

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## CHAPTER V

### THE GOOD MAN

**V**OICES were not wanting even in the days before the war, warning Christian teachers that they were doing damage to their own side by misrepresentations of the Christian ideal. A standard was set up, which, it was alleged, was too negative, too bloodless, too safe. Respectability in its narrower aspects was over-worshipped; and the conventional was too much with us. The sample Christian was one who took few risks, even in the cause of the kingdom of God: boyhood itself was suspect, if it displayed over-rashly the kind of nerve that "walks along awfully high walls and likes it." The Christian enterprise was regarded as one of yielding not to temptation, rather than as one of laying hold on life. An unpleasant likeness developed between Kipling's "Tomlinson" and the most suitable candidate for office in a Christian church. Virtue was not made that dazzling,

alluring, daring thing, which it ought to be if it is to win adherence from ardent spirits. And, especially, it was too individual. Men were concerned overmuch with a saving of their own souls, which meant no more than securing escape from sin's penalties; and the kind of man who could say that he almost had forgotten that he had a soul, so concentrated was he on some great cause, was looked at askance.

Whether these, and similar, criticisms had much body in them is hard to say. It is almost as impossible to bring an indictment against a Church, or an age, as against a nation. It has always to be remembered that the Victorian epoch, which is supposed to be the supreme period in which smug primness, leavened with a good deal of hypocrisy, was regarded as the apex of human goodness, was the time that saw the full development of the missionary spirit, that produced men of the stamp of David Livingstone, and that displayed the rise of that social conscience which urged the Church to tackle, in quite a new way, the problem of poverty.

At the same time, there has been enough truth in the criticisms to make us turn to our

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soldiery and to try to learn from them something of what goodness means. What we need to be educated in is the proportion of the ideal character, and the relative emphasis which we should use in setting forth the various aspects of virtue. That we have much to learn on such points as these from men so greatly tempted and tried as soldiers are, surely no man can be found to deny.

## I

From time to time great attempts have been made by the Church to give concrete expression to its idea of the good man. And all of them have had some of the light of truth in them, which we can only neglect at our peril. The ascetic ideal, for instance, though it contained within itself dangers of a grave kind, emphasised a fact which the world must never forget, that humanity in its upward movement is engaged in a grim struggle between flesh and spirit. No Christian system will last long, which banishes asceticism from its practice. Protestant as well as Roman must hold the body in hand. But, in its historical forms it

proved its weakness in its excuses, and seemed to forget that a perfect human being should possess a perfect body, which is not the enemy but the servant of his spirit. Meredith, a great hater of excessive asceticism, taught us wisely when he taught us that we are tripartite—"blood and brain and spirit we"; and a system which neglects that fact ultimately turns out not elevated human beings, but verminous fakirs, who lacerate the work of God's hands in their own frame, so fearfully and wonderfully made, in order to please Him. Puritanism, which developed a Protestant ascetic principle, showed, after the living fires in its soul had become smouldering, similar dangerous tendencies, which produced their own reaction. "I do not consider Puritanism mistaken; I consider it morally wicked," engagingly remarked a High Church chaplain to a gathering of clergy and ministers recently in France—a feat in hyperbole which provoked smiles. Yet it was easy enough to understand what he was after. Ethical standards, which deny the body its place as a part of man, or refuse to acknowledge that the God of the Sunset is a God in whose heart beauty dwells,

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and that He has given us these things richly to enjoy, can never be final.

Nevertheless, the truths that they taught by exaggeration shall endure. The man who is the slave of appetite can never present himself as a representative of goodness, however heroic and unselfish he may be. And nobody admits, and even insists on, this more clearly than the soldier. Not that he is an ascetic. The truth is far otherwise. War is not a school in which asceticism grows. In the actual conduct of warfare, owing to discipline and the need for a clear brain and vigorous frame, restraint is no doubt generally exercised. But when the strain is off, jangled nerves play into the hands of the subtle perils of reaction. Probably, too, many of the finer feelings are temporarily blunted; and, in any case, the conditions of life are so unnatural—monastic, without the religious impulse of monasticism—that temptation is luridly strong. Not many can realise the difference that it makes to young men to be bereft of the society of their own women-kind. The gracious influences of home—of mother, sister, lover or little child—are most potent defenders in the sore battle for self-

mastery. War inevitably means their removal; and those who are censorious should remember what such deprivation means. Consequently, although there are countless instances of very noble adherence to ancient standard, we need not expect to find the ascetic note conspicuously strong amongst men for whom life is so hard.

But you will not find amongst soldiers much encouragement for the idea that control of appetite is not part of the ideal. On the contrary, it is remarkable to discover how highly the mastery of the flesh is respected. Here and there, in the Army as out of it, men may be met with who "sit in the seat of the scorner," and deride what they call the ethics of the vicarage; but they are rarer than might be imagined. For the most part, our men have a high thought of purity, and are quite certain that a worthy religious life cannot be maintained without it. A curious fact is the lofty standard in the direction of self-control which they demand from chaplains. The most typical "old soldier," with a possibly highly coloured record, will become a severe critic of a padre who fails to set an example in these

matters. An acute observer remarked that this universal attitude is due to an appreciation of *métier*. A soldier's business is to be brave; a solicitor's to be trustworthy; and a clergyman's to be good. And inasmuch as self-mastery is an essential element in goodness, it is demanded of the chaplain. The fact of the demand indicates the depth of the appreciation that goodness is not achieved without this faculty. Perhaps, too, their wistful desire to achieve it for themselves makes them demand that the official representatives of religion shall prove in practice that its achievement is possible. A failure by the chaplains may do something to dim a half-understood hope. However, the fact is there; and from it we may at least infer that the standards of private life, common to all branches of the Church, and to all Christian times, will not be deposed, as ideals, by the men who bear arms.

## II

But we may learn more directly from them and their actual conduct, than from the ideals which we may infer from the standards which

they set for others. In two directions, soldiers have helped to restore balance to the presentation of the Christian standard. They have brought back courage to its proper place; and they have helped us to realise anew the supreme splendour of selflessness.

It is almost tautological to say that our men in the field are brave. The story of war, and not least of this war, is sinister enough; but its gloom has been irradiated by gleams of purest heroism. Not a day passes, we may believe, but some man, in whose soul we would never have discerned a while ago the shining of the knightly flame, displays that love, than which no man hath greater, by giving up his life for his friend. And daring, great as that ever shown by a knight of any Round Table, or by the fearless sea-rovers of the spacious days, is the continuous spectacle offered to the world by those amazing lads whose element is the air. There is nothing from which no good comes. Even the hammer of war, as it breaks and splinters, uncovers veins of purest gold.

How much of the ordinary bravery of a man in the battle-line is due to the effect of the crowd in which he is one, we cannot say; all

that we know is that it is manifested plain for any one to see, and that there are innumerable instances of the two o'clock in the morning sort, performed in darkness and in solitude. There is scarcely a stain on Britain's shield here. Some of it, no doubt, is native; the same deed may have different moral values when performed by different men. Some wonderfully constructed natures find not only their courage, but their capacity for quick decisions and competent action, rise with danger. But a vast deal of it is a doggedly determined courage, the peculiar possession and distinction of men who are mortally afraid. But if to be "feared of a thing and yet to do it is what makes the prettiest kind of a man," there are several hundreds of thousands of very pretty men in the British Army.

Now, this quality must be restored to its proper place in the presentation of the ideal character by Christian people. In returning to an emphasis upon courage—such as was given in the periods of chivalry—we are only reverting to an accurate portrayal of the character of our Lord. Some one has related that a Japanese General was given the Gospels to

read for the first time, and after he had perused them, he was asked what was the quality in Jesus Christ that struck him most. "His bravery" was the reply. It is not, perhaps, the most usual judgment; but there are instances and to spare in our Lord's life that give it point. For it was He who set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem. The knowledge of what was likely to happen was clear in His mind. Even the disciples were alive to the danger, and with importunate entreaty strove to dissuade Him. But He had made up His mind whither duty called; and, if danger called too, He was content. The hatred of Him by the higher orders was well known, as was also their lack of scruple in achieving their ends. They were led by a strong, determined man in the person of Caiaphas—the real villain of the piece—and imagination could easily paint in sombre colours what would happen if he got his way. In point of fact, the Agony, the Scourging and the Cross did happen; nevertheless, with the shadow of them all upon Him, He set His face steadfastly to the point of peril. What cour-

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age is greater than the courage of the Captain of the Host?

And during all His life, He had been displaying the same quality at its height. Often instances of it creep into the Gospel records almost inadvertently. There is no parade of it. It merely inevitably displays itself as the record of His life is unfolded. For instance, there is the occasion when He boldly faced religious prejudice through loyalty to the truth as He saw it. When the disciples plucked the corn, half-unconsciously, as they passed through the fields on the Sabbath day, they offended the Pharisaic rules in the most unquestionable manner. Every device which the mis-spent ingenuity of the Scribes could discover had been utilised to fence in the formal sanctity of the day. Its outward observance had become as rigid and as unspiritual as men could make it. The observance of the rules was as prevalent as spiritual use of it seems to have been rare. A religious prejudice had gathered round it of the most formidable kind; and such a prejudice can become the most relentless and bitter of enemies. But our Lord,

with no hesitation at all, faced it. And His immortal sentence "the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath," was one of the bravest replies ever given to the narrow-minded for the sake of truth.

Nor was prejudice the only foe He encountered. He dealt with vested interests in the same high, heroic spirit. The two most certain ways of arousing the spirits of cruelty and revenge are just these—to strike at the prejudices which men mistake for convictions and to affect their pockets in the name of righteousness. But when our Lord dealt with the chattering crowds in the precincts of the Temple, He attacked the latter, as in the corn-fields He had attacked the former. He was in the midst of danger sufficient already one might have thought. The plottings that resulted in His death were already in full swing. But here was duty to be done; the real sanctity of the Father's house was to be defended. The spirit of reverence was to be regenerated. Wherefore, He cleansed the Temple.

Such instances make it clear enough why the Japanese General gave the answer that he did. Our Lord did His duty, at whatever

cost in personal risk. And, in as far as that statement can be made about our men to-day, though the circumstances are so different, they are helping to bring back a quality, the splendour of which had been half-forgotten, to its rightful position of dignity in our thought of what a good man should be.

But courage moves upward to a virtue nobler still. For courage at its highest merges into fortitude, which is a mark of natures that are noble indeed. Botticelli, seen through Ruskin's eyes, has the right way of it, when he paints his figure representing this virtue, not in the guise of some proud warrior, ardent for the fray, but as one who is weary, who will rejoice greatly when the word comes to disarm for the long day's work is done, but whose hand, nevertheless, again will resolutely clasp the sword-hilt, and whose spirit again will shake itself free from its fatigue, if the bugle calls to battle. After this manner, in amazing measure, are our soldiery. Their endurance, their purposeful good cheer, their absurd habits of grumbling about everything that is of no moment and thereby keeping their minds off the trials that might unnerve them,

their grim will to carry on—these are the facts that again and again impress the observer, and bring to his lips, as a humble and sincere expression of his thought, the words:

“By the living God that made you  
You’re a better man than I am, Gunga Dhin!”

And here it is that our defenders have a word for the Church. Days are coming when Christian fortitude will be tested—stern days after the war, when Christian principles must be enunciated, as reconstructions of our shattered society come to be attempted. We need not imagine that even the war will secure for us that the spirit of the world will yield without bitter struggles to the Spirit of Christ in our social life. The Church will need all the courage she can find, if she is to play her proper part in securing for the world the good that may be latent in all this pain. She must seek it earnestly, as a jewel of great price; and endeavour to secure that those who have displayed it so conspicuously in war, shall dedicate their power of endurance to the victorious issue of the strife in which she is engaged. To that end, she must make it clear that her ideal

man is one who possesses it. After all, the older teachers of the Church *assumed* fortitude as a virtue in a Christian. Before the specifically Christian graces of faith, hope and charity were manifest in a character, the "natural," or "rational," virtues of Temperance, Prudence, Justice and Fortitude were taken for granted. We must get back to Aquinas and to Dante here, and by example as well as by precept prove that the Christian is one who, even in the midst of fears, is able to endure unto the end.

### III

Some months ago, the present writer happened to have occasion to take his walks abroad on a somewhat dismal French road. The usual mud abounded, and a rain was descending which would have done credit to the Hebrides. At the side of the road a military waggon was drawn up, and upon it two men seemed to be engaged in violent altercation. A nearer inspection proved that one of them had lost his overcoat and was, apparently, shivering and unwell. His friend was searching the outlying regions of a soldier's vocabulary

—regions more vivid than refined—to describe the folly the other had displayed in mislaying so useful a garment on such a day; and ended his tirade by saying, “ ’Ere—put my coat on.” With the hands of compulsion he forced his companion to take the covering and himself proceeded to get wet, the while he chanted his desire that some one should take him home to dear old Blighty. The ritual of the act, so to speak, was scarcely evangelical; but the act itself was the gold of Christian charity. It was another case for reflections upon Gunga Dhin!

The fact is that we have much to learn from these men concerning the heart of the Christian idea of good; for deeds of unselfishness are startlingly common. Wounded men will vie with each other to get a friend attended to first. “I’m all right, but my mate there is pretty bad,” is the common formula. Probably the mate, on being questioned, will invert the statement. War may make men savage; its sufferings seem to make them wondrous kind. There is a large number of Sir Philip Sidneys in the forces to-day; and they stand in striking contrast to many reputable figures, who find

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it easier to talk about a cup of cold water than to give one. In a Scottish park there stands a curious monument erected by an eighteenth century legal light, who cut a considerable figure in his time, on which he caused this inscription to be engraved: "Graft benevolence upon the tree of self-love. The fruit will be delicious." It is a long, long way from that pretentious instruction upon how not to be a Christian, to the episode upon the French road.

The fact of the continuous stream of unselfishness displayed as between individuals on service should give encouragement to those who desire to think well of their fellow-men. There is enough and to spare of evil in the heart; no supporter of original sin need fail for lack of evidence; but for our belief that God made man in His own image there is evidence also. It is comforting to know that, amongst all sorts and conditions of men, the image has not been blotted out.

But it is not only in personal relations that unselfishness is shown. It is seen also in regard to the cause as a whole. Many unexpected men seem to have reached the point of assent to what may come of pain and loss to

themselves, provided that the world is to grow fairer thereby. Sometimes, the expressions of this selflessness are on a lofty scale, as in the case of a young Scottish minister, who served as a combatant, and has lost his life, who declared his perfect willingness for annihilation, if only so could the world's betterment come. But simpler men reach the same point. A sergeant in a base camp some time ago was returning to his unit after being wounded twice. He was, as we have it in Scotland, "fey." A presentiment was upon him that he would not come back; and to all optimistic prophecies he turned a deaf ear. "But," he said, "I don't mind. It's going to be a better world for the kiddies afterwards." What is this but religion in a very pure form? What are these but good men? Would not the Church be stronger in the world for God's Kingdom, if these were His recognised representatives, in place of egregious and safe persons, whose experiments in practical Christianity do not go further than grafting a little benevolence on a deep-rooted tree of self-love?

From this self-identification with a cause springs the soldier's negative contribution to

the thought of good. His thought of blackest wrong is disloyalty to the community which stands for his ideal. The sin of sins is treachery; the basal virtue of all is loyalty. A chaplain has reported that a story of treachery on the part of some man once went round a battalion; and the men spoke of it with bated breath, as of a horror too dire to be contemplated. The penalty for treachery is death. It may be doubted if a soldier could be found who would think it too severe.

Courage, selflessness, loyalty—these are the virtues that are being brought back from the blood-stained fields by the men, who offer their bodies to be broken that we may be safe. They are not angels, nor do they look it. They are not saints; and often those who grieve most at their failings are themselves. But one thing they are, and that is men. And it is a Church in which manhood of that sort will find a congenial atmosphere that must await them when they come home.



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THE SWORD OF THE SAINTS

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## CHAPTER VI

### THE SWORD OF THE SAINTS

“**P**RAYER is the very sword of the saints,” said Francis Thompson. The age of the Church’s victories has ever seen its swift flash from out the scabbard. If in the last days the words of prayer had become almost congealed on the lips of multitudes, there has now come upon us a new day when prayer has again become a reality. Men and women who had ceased to pray for themselves have been driven to the feet of God in an agony of supplication praying for their loved ones. They cannot help it. “We have in these days of scientific enlightenment a great deal of discussion about the efficacy of prayer,” wrote William James, “and many reasons have been given us why we should not pray, whilst others are given why we should. But in all this very little is said of the reasons why we do pray. . . . The reason why we pray is simply that we cannot help praying.” We have, in very

truth, come to the day when we cannot help praying. In the moment of extremity the appeal to God, conscious or unconscious, springs from the heart. "They are at their wit's end, then they cry to Jehovah," is the testimony of the Psalmist. And even the funk-prayer is heard, for he adds: "And He bringeth them out of their distresses." What the cloudless day cannot do, the hurricane effects. "I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go," wrote Abraham Lincoln. "My own wisdom and that of all around me seemed insufficient for the day." And so it is now. The statesman in his cabinet and the soldier in the trench are at one in the day when all earthly refuge fails and God alone remains. "I had not prayed for years but I prayed then," is the testimony of many a man.

## I

There were two things which conspired to dry up the fountain of prayer, and we may well consider them for a moment. The one was the realisation of the universe as the sphere of

changeless law, and the other the sense of our individual insignificance in relation to our growing knowledge of the vastness of the universe. In a world where law reigned and in which the human life was but as the flapping of a midge's wing, it seemed but mere fanaticism to pray for anything with any expectation save of a reflex purifying effect in the heart of the suppliant. Are we then to put the sword of prayer in its sheath and draw it no more?

(1) No doubt the material universe presents to us the operation of changeless laws. From the centre to the circumference these laws operate regardless of the puny will of man. In such a world definite petition seems as absurd as that God should say to the sun every morning, as Chesterton remarks, "Get up and do it again." The sun is controlled by law and everything is automatic. The heavens declare the glory of law. God is shut up in the steel prison house of cosmic law without ever a chink through which tenderness or help can pulsate towards the creatures He has made. Such a conception of God freezes the fountain of prayer at its source. A man may still go on praying, driven by irrational im-

pulse, but prayer is only a species of spiritual gymnastics—mere “dumb-bell exercise.”

But to surrender the prerogative of prayer to a conception such as this is to be blind to the great fact that there is in the world something greater than law, and that is personality. We ourselves know how the human personality can mould and shape unchangeable law and make it do his will. If gravitation decrees that water shall run downward, men can decree that it flow upward to the level of its source. If electricity can rend the heavens and spread disaster and death in the destroying lightning, man can take its laws and so combine them that it drives his machinery, makes his cities bright almost as day, and send his messages round the earth. If law imprisons the stone and iron and marble in the everlasting hills, men by the same law can rear St. Paul's and hang the iron bridges high in air over the chasms. Instead of unchangeable law making progress impossible, it is the fact of law being unchangeable, and thus to be depended on, that makes all progress possible. By it the aeroplane mounts to heaven, and the shell screams over head. And if man can thus

mould law to his will, who can dare say that He Who is the source of all law is helpless and imprisoned?

What is law but the ordered will of personality? Law is unthinkable without a law-giver. The progress of philosophy has reached the stage when the whole universe is realised to be but materialised thought. Thought can have but one source, a thinking personality. The only expression of the source of all things is a Personality shaping the universe to His will. The relation of men to God is thus a personal relationship—the relationship of the finite to the infinite Personality. And if the finite personality can control law and make it do his will, how much more the infinite Personality? If on the one hand the world be pre-determined law, on the other the Personality of whose thought the universe is but a shadow can mould that law and direct it as He will. We know but little of the secrets of God's working, but we can understand how problems which to us are insoluble are not even problems to Him. To the savage a motor is an insoluble enigma; to the mechanic that controls it there is no mystery whatever

within its compass. And we are far less fitted to judge the universe than the primitive man to judge a motor-car!

We can, at least, be sure of this, that there is nothing in the order of the universe that can obstruct and render futile the prayer that is in harmony with the divine purpose. God's personality is the one reality; and when the sailor on the deep or the soldier on the battle-field cry to Him, the cry does not beat against the prison-walls of law like waves fretting at the base of the cliff, but mounts to the heart of Him, the outgoing of whose will is the sustenance and the glory of the material world, and Who is infinitely greater than the operation of His law. Within the operation of law He is free to shape the issues of the soul: free to hear and to answer prayer.

(2) No doubt it was easier to conceive prayer as moving the will of God when this world was to men the centre of the universe with the sun and the stars its circling ministers. But now, when we have realised that this world is but a tiny globule, a third-rate satellite of a fifth-rate star, in relation to the universe, but as a grain of sand on the world's shores, and

human life but the mere flashes of troubled consciousness succeeding each other, generation after generation into darkness, it does seem but human vanity to think that creatures so insignificant and ephemeral should claim to move the arm of God or affect His will. It is a strange result of the glimpse that has come to us of an illimitable universe—this cheapening of ourselves. In the vision of the boundless material universe the soul is overwhelmed and its cry is silenced.

To deliver ourselves from this material prison-house we have only to think that what seems of little account to ignorance is of vital moment to knowledge. To the eye of the illiterate a library presents the aspect of thousands of books, all alike, varying only in size—a dreary and a barren waste. Kindlings for fire—that is all their value to him. But to the lover of books each is an individual entity, with each its separate quota of knowledge and each its own expression of mind and soul. When first you find yourself in the heart of Africa each native seems like every other native, all alike as peas, with nothing to distinguish black from black. But to the man that knows and

loves them each is an individual, as clearly differentiated as the members of the one family are to the parents. As knowledge grows the separate individuality grows clearer in outline, more precious in essence. And we make our appeal to Omniscience. He made us all, and He made each different, and He will never repeat a single personality. Each is therefore of inestimable value to Him. And the cry of each He will hear. He sees us not in masses but as individuals. That is why He never makes two out of the same mould.

We have only to exercise our imagination (and every exercise of the imagination is in the line of Him Who saw kingdoms in mustard seeds) to be delivered from the bondage of the thought of material vastness rendering prayer futile. Even the material world is sensitive to the feeblest force brought to play upon it. When the ball a child throws into the air descends to earth there is a two-fold movement—the movement of the ball downward and the movement of the earth upward to meet it. It is only the lack of sensitiveness in our instruments that prevents our measuring the earth's ascent to meet the ball. And it is only because

we lack imagination that we have difficulty in realising that in the spiritual realm, where personality alone is great, God must respond to every approach of His children. Wheresoever the son says, "I will arise and go to my father," there also the Father must arise and go to meet His son. Such is the law of spiritual gravitation.

It is when we realise the relative value of the material and the spiritual that we realise that the soul can still appeal to God in the assurance that its cry is heard. A material world is a worthless thing compared to a soul. The mountain may fall and crush a man, but the man in being crushed to death is greater than the mountain, for he knows he is being crushed, but the mountain knows nothing. A soul that can love and laugh and pray is greater far than a dead world. The poorest labourer in the mines is of infinitely greater value than all the diamonds of Kimberley; for they know nothing, whereas he is born with the possibilities of endless growth in goodness. They can reflect the sun, but he can reflect God and cling in love and in terror to His hand. That is the romance of religion. And in that romance the

thrill and the power lies in the dialogue when the soul communes with God. And that is prayer.

Surely we can deliver ourselves from the bondage of our little knowledge and refuse to sell our birthright at the bidding of those who speak either of changeless law or of a limitless universe. For law is but our slave, and the universe only our standing-place. We are each greater than law, greater than the universe. And though the great army be numbered by millions, and to man we be but a number, yet to God we are each as dear and as valuable as if we, each alone, existed. And when we turn to Him in noisome trench or on the swelling deep, there is a thrill of joyous response in the realm unseen as the words are spoken as of old: "Behold! he prayeth." It is morally impossible that men should have been since the dawn of time talking to a heaven that is as brass and from which no answer can come.

## II

But though the reasonableness of prayer be admitted yet there are many who in the heyday

of strength and of youth dismiss the thought of prayer as mere effeminacy. They have heard the words, "God's will be done," and they sounded as the sign of a wearied and sad resignation. Such a mood was not for them as yet. But so far from prayer being the voice of submission it is the most moving, the most vehement, and the most victorious desire of the heart. For prayer is not the quietism of age, but rather the unloosing of dynamic force, and the marshalling of tireless energy for glorious victory.

(1) Prayer provides God with the instrument requisite for the achievement of His purpose. For God works by means; and the chosen instruments of His will are men. Without the co-operation of men God is helpless. The war-cry of old fired the blood: "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." There was only one sword, that of God wielded by Gideon. Without Gideon that sword of God could not be wielded.

". . . If my hand slacked  
 I should rob God, since He is fullest good  
 He could not make Antonio Stradivari's violins  
 Without Antonio."

We can thus see that in the work of saving the world God is helpless without the prayers of the heart. For what is prayer but the glimpse of the purpose of God for the world and the surrender of the life as an instrument for the doing of that purpose? The men who pray: "Thy will be done," and who realise the urgency of that Will becoming operative, are also the men who gird on their armour and go forth to fight that the will of God may triumph over all its foes. It has ever been so. Men have prayed and through prayer have seen the beckoning hand of God, and then have thrown their lives into the midst of the conflict. To pray thus is to fill up the ranks of God's army—the army that marches to certain victory.

(2) Not only does prayer place the weapon He needs in the hand of God, but it can release God's quickening power and mould His action. We can realise this in various ways. When a man is living his life on a low level of selfishness and animalism, God treats that man by the method of hedging him in, of obstructing and isolating him. This is the end to which God's ordering of life always works towards

those who defy His laws. But the man is aroused to a realisation of the folly and sin of his way. He turns away from his evil courses. He prays God to visit him in his low estate and to deal with him not as a rebel but as one who is seeking to do His will. Instantly God's attitude towards that man is changed. All the power of God that formerly fought against him is now fighting for him. He is dealt with no longer as a rebel but as a son. Thus can prayer alter the dealing of God with the soul.

It is the same with a nation. Here is a nation sinking on its lees into the slough of degeneration. The altars of God are being forsaken, and the haunts of their own pleasure are their one resort. They desert the field of hardness and refuse the burden of preparing to defend the empire their fathers reared. They carry on a conflict of words, shouting themselves hoarse over bi-lateral campaigns regarding false issues. The vital matters of goodness and character are forgotten. They crowd the shrines of Bacchus and Aphrodite. For such a nation God has only one purpose, and that is destruction. But that nation is suddenly arrested in the midst of its downward

progress. There comes the sound of guns across the sea heralding doom. There arises a sudden emergency. It has to choose between peril and degrading safety; between the facing of death and dishonour. And lo! the ancient beacon fires of righteousness and self-sacrifice suddenly blaze forth once more. The nation calls upon God. The fields of its pleasure are forsaken and its manhood crowds once more the fields of hardness. It lays hold on the sword with the awe that comes to the heart that realises that the sword it grips is God's. And instantly the will of God regarding that nation is altered. If formerly that will was destruction now it is salvation. If there be a will of God that prayer cannot alter, that will by which the heavens stand, there is another will of God that can be altered—a will with which man is called upon to wrestle, and wrestling to save his soul. We can thus see that prayer can be the mightiest power in the universe. It can even move the arm of the omnipotent Creator Who speaks and it is done, Who commands and all things stand fast.

## III

But God does not answer every prayer. There is only one answer for many a prayer, and that is—silence. “When ye make your prayers I will not hear; your hands are full of blood.” When we read of Christians praying against Christians, we have to remember that prayer is only heard when it is offered in Christ’s name—that is in His spirit of love and meekness, and self-sacrifice.

A Frenchman, Julien Flament, wrote a mordant sketch that illustrates this. He depicted the German Emperor, clad in his grey cloak, “flecked with blood,” bowing his helmet before the Crib. He addresses the Divine Child:—“Thou art on our side, O Lord: I am Thy lieutenant. . . . Thou wilt share my triumph. . . . Lord God of the German armies, bless Thou the German Emperor.” The Christ-Child, silent, seems only to grow pale. The Kaiser prays again. He promises to place on the ruins of the world: “Thy Cross and my flag.” Still the Child is silent, and the Kaiser, with trembling voice, asks:—

“Have I not done and suffered enough for Thee? Millions of my soldiers lie dead; the ravens are weary of their feast.” At last the Christ-Child softly and sorrowfully makes answer:—“I would fain bless thee, but I cannot. In Belgium last winter I lost My way. I took refuge beneath a hedgerow from the icy blast. Some drunken German soldiers sprang upon Me. I had no defence but My smile and My tears. . . . To punish Me they drew their swords. . . . How can I bless thee without My hands, the little hands of a child . . . *which they cut off.*”

That visualises the truth that hands red with innocent blood are raised in vain to a holy God. When a man prays in his own name, and not in Christ’s name; when he uses prayer merely as an instrument for the gratification of his own pride, and the realisation of his earthly ambitions; when he desires his will to prevail over the Will of God, and that his arm of flesh should wield the power of the Omnipotent, such a prayer is not addressed to the all-holy God, but to a God of indulgence fashioned in his own image. The granting of such prayer would mean that God’s Will would never be

done. For such prayer there is within the eternal glory no voice nor any that answers. The very soul of prayer is: "Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven." When we surrender our lives into conformity with that Divine Will, then, and then only, do our prayers have power with God and prevail. It is the nation that consecrates itself to the doing of the Will of God through and through, that cleanses its life, and feels in its heart Christ's eternal passion for righteousness—that strives to do God's Will in the midst of its streets, and unto the ends of the earth—it is that nation whose prayers God hears and will answer.

#### IV

There remains the difficulty of those who have prayed in the Spirit of Christ, and whose prayers have brought no answer. Can it be that the prayer of love and unselfishness can be hurled back in contempt from the Throne of God? To that there is only one answer. No true prayer is ever left unanswered.

(1) Our prayers are often answered when we are bewailing their being unanswered.

Many have prayed in these last years for the cleansing of the national life, and they do not realise that God has answered their prayer by the hurricane of war. How many prayers have risen to heaven in these last three years for the victory of righteousness and freedom! And the victory has tarried. But God is answering the prayers of His people all the time. For victory can only come in one way—through the spirit of self-sacrifice that bares the breast to the foe. In the millions of men who rallied to the flag of freedom in the early days, who sacrificed all that the nation might live, who came from the far north-west, and from the long wash of Australasian seas, with the passion of patriotism alight in their eyes, God answered our prayers. In the endurance of these men when, unprovided and well-nigh unarmed, they held the line, thin and wavering, that stood between us and destruction—He answered our prayers. And when, at last, the burden became grievous and almost intolerable, a new spirit breathed through a hundred millions across the sea who speak our language, and they realised that we were bleeding and dying for the world's soul, and they took their

place by our side, saying: "We will share your burden, fighting and dying, even to the end"—then, surely, God was answering our prayers. The heavens have been ablaze in these last years with the chariots and horsemen of God hurrying to the help of the legions of righteousness, but our eyes failed to recognise them, and we bewailed the silence of God and prayers left unanswered!

The form of our prayer is often denied when the substance of our prayer is granted. St. Monica prayed in a sea-side chapel on the African coast that her son, Augustine, might be prevented from going to Rome, for she feared what might become of him in that home of licentiousness. Even as she prayed with strong crying and tears, her son sailed for Italy. And, there, Ambrose led him to the light, and he became a Christian in the very place from which his mother's prayers would have kept him. If the thing we plead for and the way we choose, be oft denied, it is because there is something greater, and a better way, which God is preparing to bestow upon us. That is why some of our prayers are often met by an uncompromising refusal. But the spirit

of our prayers ever brings enrichment, if not the enrichment we crave.

(2) The answer to prayer comes slowly, and because of that we are often discouraged. But, again, we must remember that God works by means, and not arbitrarily. A man may pray for a loving heart, and his prayer is answered by the opportunity being provided him for loving service. A prayer for food can only be answered through the long processes of germinating and ripening grain. Jezreel prays the corn; the corn prays the earth; the earth prays the heavens for rain, and the heavens pray God. An apple cannot grow without the co-operation of all the world's laws. And prayer for its answering requires a combination of vast forces. While the processes for its answer are in motion, we must not despair of the ultimate answer just because these processes are slow.

## V

The highest form of prayer is the prayer of intercession. That, at least, we have learned in these days. Many who had ceased to pray

for themselves have, in the days of stress, clasped the feet of God in an agony of intercession for their sons and their loved ones. This prayer for others is the nearest we can come to Him Who said: "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not"; and Who, nailed to the Cross, interceded for those who drove the nails through His hands and feet, saying: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

We need have little difficulty in realising how prayer offered far away at home may garrison the hearts of men in the day of battle. As the vapours arise in the heart of the equatorial seas, condense into clouds, and are wafted by the winds across the ocean until, arrested by some mountain range, they fall in showers on the parched earth, clothing it with greenness and with riches; so the prayers rising from the hearts at home come as spiritual enrichment to souls far away. For God is omnipresent, and this world is islanded in the spiritual and the unseen. The impulse wherewith the praying heart moves God can be instantly communicated to the person prayed for; for both are enveloped by God. And if

prayer be the appointed means for unloosening the divine energy, we can realise how urgent the need that we should give ourselves to prayer. In the grimy trenches, as he keeps his watch under the stars, weariness falls on the soldier as a pall; but suddenly a thought comes to him of home; a memory of the faces he loves, and he recalls moments when the vision of God flashed out, and he feels again the thrill he felt when first he left all and followed; and there comes the consciousness that God is with him, and that nothing can stand against him. There often come such moments when that environment of misery is transmitted into a great cathedral aglow with the very presence of God. Whence comes that transmitting power that changes a miry trench into Bethel? It has come because someone far away is praying, and has unloosed the vision, and sent the Spirit to revivify the heart. Thus prayer can inspire an army with the conquering spirit.

There is a story written of the conscripts at Waterloo which tells how they fought all day, until suddenly in the evening they had a sense that there was nothing behind them. The field was empty, and there was no support.

It was then their hearts failed them, and they broke and fled. Men can fight the foe in front, but they cannot endure emptiness behind. So also is it in the spiritual realm. The spirit that conquers is as the wind blowing whither it listeth. It comes to the hearts of men, and conscript peasants break through marshalled hosts, and trample empires underfoot; it lays hold on moorsmen and cottars, and they pull down tyrannies that defy the world. And that spirit that fires the heart with enthusiasm, and makes the will as steel, comes through prayer. Behind the armies of freedom the spiritual fields are not empty. The prayers of those who agonise, wrestling with God, are the reserves that win long campaigns. They are the flash of inspiration to the jaded brain, the feeling of irresistible power that sweeps over every obstacle. This was what General Gordon meant when he said: "I have prayed my boats up the Nile." The cataracts could not stop men whom he inspired with an indomitable spirit.

## VI

This is the supreme need in these last days, that we should betake ourselves to prayer. For the war is now a war of endurance, a conflict of the soul, and the victory will rest with the nation that can sustain to the bitter end the will to conquer. And there is but one way of making our will adamant, and that is by merging it in the will of God. It is God's Will alone that knows no change, and man's will will be as God's in that measure in which the human will identifies itself with the Divine. And in all ages men have found but one way of reinforcing the will from the reservoirs of God, and that the way of prayer. Along that channel came the power that endured.

But the prayer that would thus inflame the soul and enervate the arm must be alive with strength. "The curse of so much religion," said George Meredith, "is that men cling to God with their weakness rather than their strength." The prayer that renews is a wrestling with God even unto blood. "Being in an agony He prayed more earnestly." The

prayers that are lightly tossed into the Sacred Presence can mean nothing. Even we would not heed such prayers. The rivers of spiritual vitality that renew the faltering courage and enable races to set their faces towards Calvary with unflinching feet, have their rise in the souls that, at one with Christ in the agony of intercession, lay hold on God refusing to let go.

There comes the moment when the soul musters all its energy and lays hold on the Unseen—that moment before men go over the parapet, and look death in the face with faces unveiled. Then, for an instant at least, the soul and God are face to face. “O, my God, help me to do my work thoroughly, and, if it be Thy Will, bring me safe through,” is the cry of the soul then. There is the red of Gethsemane in that prayer. And when the hearts of men in the after days, facing the battle against the world’s iniquity, will so cry to God. . . . then the world’s redemption shall draw nigh.



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# IMMORTALITY

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## CHAPTER VII

### IMMORTALITY

**T**HERE is little need for any man to go to our soldiers in order to convince them of Immortality; for they are convinced already that "death's true name is Onward." Votes have sometimes been taken in huts where the men congregate, as to whether they believe that their dead friends have gone out like the flame of a candle; and the usual majority against such a thought was in the proportion of nine to one. It may be doubted whether such a preponderance would have been secured in time of peace. One cause of so much agreement that death does not close all is stated to be simply love of friends. Men might think that they themselves should pass into nothingness; but they do not believe it possible that such a fate has pursued those whom they have loved, and lost awhile on the field of battle. At any rate, such is the faith of many thousands of men whom I asked to give their frank opinion.

They believe that the dead are alive, and that they will meet them again some summer morning.

But when it comes to a question, not of the fact, but of the content of immortality, we find a very different attitude. They are deeply interested in what happens after death—and no wonder. But they are by no means satisfied with traditional answers—which is no cause for surprise, either. Neither do they give much heed to the sentimental soothing which is ladled out by some who tell them that a soldier's death is an immediate passport into bliss. For they have been dealing with realities, and have a keen sense for that which is out of touch with facts. They realise that the manner of a man's death does not alter fundamental principles; and they are quite clear that the moral government of the world is not weak. At the same time, all of us must recognise that the sacrifice of youth is a great sacrifice. The sudden yielding up of all that life offers, when life is at its fairest, will be taken favourably into account by perfect equity. Those who have died before their prime that others may live, and that the world may be

more worthy, are in a position of their own. Dante was no sentimentalist; but it was he who conceived the heaven of the soldiers of the Cross—the first heaven that lies completely beyond earth's shadow—the only heaven which bears in the midst of its ruddy light the sign of the Cross, along the bars of which the gallant dead flash in splendour—the only heaven, until that of the Church Triumphant, in which the vision of Christ Himself appears. And there is an evangelical point behind such imaginings; for a voluntary death for an ideal is an expression of faith, and by faith are men saved. Everything, we are all agreed, depends on a man's state of being; and assent to death for a good cause indicates a state of being full of promise for the unknown years.

## I

The Christian Church has two outlines to offer of the Life to which we all move. Both are open to criticism. The Roman view of Purgatory does not meet our present difficulties, inasmuch as entrance to it is solely for the saved, with a view to their purification.

It leaves the problem of the unfaithful darker than ever. It only puts the haven of rest and felicity further off: and, in addition, it has proved itself in past ages to be the origin of manifest abuses and much first-class superstition. The view of the Reformed Church, on the other hand, does not square with the facts of human nature. It proceeds upon a hypothesis of black and white, whereas most of us are grey; nor does it take account of unequal chance. It has one great advantage, however, in that it concentrates attention upon present opportunity, which is precisely what our Lord did. His teaching upon the future life is curiously veiled. His doctrine of the importance of the present is as emphatic as it can be. He was evidently sorely anxious that men should enter in at the open door here and now, and deprecated anything that ministers to human sloth in moral decision. Inasmuch as our Reformed ancestors caught this note in His preaching, and reiterated the urgency and solemnity of His appeals, they cannot be wholly off the right track. At the same time, they, strong men as they were, tended to push Scripture beyond the legitimate point to sup-

port the sharp rigidity of their views. One of the "proof-texts" used in the Westminster Confession to support the doctrine of hell is "the spirits in prison"—a flagrant case of tearing a phrase from its context, seeing that the full text, "He preached unto the spirits in prison," is one of the chief supports in Scripture of those who hold to an intermediate state. There are well-known and sufficient historical reasons for their anxiety to be rid of Purgatory; but it might have been as well if they had displayed a little more caution in defining matters, which our Lord Himself set forth in symbol. We can of necessity know but little of the conditions of a purely spiritual life. It is best for us to bow the head, and wait.

## II

But one point is clear concerning the Church's teaching. All branches, Roman and Reformed, agree that ultimate destiny is fixed at death. And many men, not in the least irreverently, want to know the grounds for that great assumption. For it alike perplexes us in regard to some facts that we know

in relation to death, and seems to be out of accord with some of the clearest Scriptural teaching concerning God. If destiny is irrevocably fixed, why do some seem to have so much longer a chance? If it were not by reason of strength that men reach four-score years, but were the rule for all; if all experienced the varying ministries of the middle-years and of old age, we might not feel the same difficulty in regarding earth as a final probation for eternity. But the facts are far different, and war-time especially brings the difference home to us. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, a lad of nineteen, with his character all unformed, is struck out of life. What might he not have known and won, if he had lived till twenty-five? It is all very well to say that the Judge of all the earth will do right. Of course He will; but the Church teaches that according to the state of a man at the moment of death he must be judged, and it is a wild theory to imagine that only those who hereafter would resist the impulses of grace are permitted to die on the battle-field, and that those who will take them will be given opportunities so to do. That would be an inver-

sion of the adage that those whom the gods love die young, with a vengeance. The plain fact is that death comes unequally; it finds multitudes of the immature unprepared; and, consequently, the thought that the moment of passing is the moment of eternal settlement seems to contain implications concerning the world-government strangely alien to the conception of a God of justice.

In addition, there is the perplexity of a conception of a Heavenly Father who shuts the door on anything but absolute evil. If Christ emphasised the necessity of seizing the unforgiving minute, He still more emphasised the unchangeableness of the love of God. There is no need to search the Scriptures to find that doctrine. It is writ large on every page. No man would have to wrench texts from their context to prove that thesis. If he had nothing else, he could turn to Luke xv, and to the story of the Cross. And how are we to square that great teaching with a doctrine that banishes erring lads, struck down by a German bullet, eternally from the divine Presence? The fact is that it is a circle that cannot be squared. Love does not shut doors; the gates

of its city are open continually. The only difficulty about entrance is our unwillingness to turn our steps to the shelter that is within them.

There is some mediæval story of a youth who passed through the doors inscribed with the abandonment of hope. His friend, his lady, and his mother in due course came to the realm of rest, and found him not. His friend went straightway to the presence of God and pleaded for his release. His lady broke the bounds of heaven, and, finding her way to the gates of his prison, laid hold upon their bars and demanded that he should be set free. But his mother, taking the same path, shook the barriers that held him from her, and with importunity asked for one thing only, that she should be permitted to reach his side, and should be allowed with him to share it all. And mother-love is a love that springs from God. "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." It is not easy to think of a mother who would cease to work for her son's redemption because a shell had shattered his body. The fact is that the mothers are hopelessly unorthodox. They assent, in the-

ory, to the conceivable ultimate tragedy for some other mother's sons; but never for their own. I have been at pains to press for an answer on this point, from mothers who are manifestly "far ben," and the answer is always the same; the reason being that they do not believe that their love can be beaten. And if they, being evil, would give good gifts, here or anywhere, to their children, how much more will their Heavenly Father? The Church is in danger of making soldiers say that their mothers are more worship-worthy than God.

Now, this may apparently lead to a view of destiny of the easiest and most un-moral sort. But that is only an appearance; for these same mothers will permit any pain to come to their children, if thereby purity shall be their delight. They seek first the Kingdom of God for their sons; and are prepared to allow, and to endure, any suffering if that may be their ultimate possession. A good mother is the very last person on earth to agree that her son should permanently be satisfied with sin. But she will suffer any sort of cross, to the end of time, to make him whole. Surely God is like that; and the only hands that can close

the gates of final peace against a man are those of the man himself.

Reflections of this sort do not make the world less severe morally. The great danger of pushing inferences from the love of God to their legitimate limit lies in the proneness of human nature to postpone effort. If we have chances beyond the grave, why trouble now? Let us gather roses while we may. But, wherever or whenever a man would lay hold on eternal life, it is he that must take the decisive action; and there are various considerations that lead us to come to the conclusion that the sooner we take that action the better. The love of God never changes; but we do—if not for the better, then for the worse; and it will never be easier for us to turn to **Him** than now.

### III

Death must indeed be “an awfully great adventure.” To reach the bourne, whence no traveller returns, must contain experiences past imagining. But there is one remark that we may make about them—they must happen

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to *us*. It is the same man that will wake there, that has lived here.

If we can say that, we say enough to make us take grave thought for that to-morrow that so quickly dawns for all men. In some quarters a queer belief is found that death itself is a regenerating agency—as if it were a kind of sacrament that cleansed the soul from sin. I have discovered strong traces of that suggestion amongst the miners of the North of England, and occasionally amongst soldiers drawn from other parts. It is a comfortable teaching; let a man die, and dying itself is enough to secure a man from death's penalties.

It need hardly be said that Christianity offers no support to this view. Abraham, Dives and Lazarus retain their identity upon the other side. Death does not change a man, it only makes him more manifest. For he has passed to a spiritual world, in which spiritual things are discerned. Its values are moral; its beauties are the beauties of virtue, its uglinesses are the uglinesses of sin. The splendour of the white rose has become the splendour of purity; the loveliness of the red rose

has become the glory of sacrifice. The fashion of this world has passed away; and beauty has become the beauty of holiness. In relation to these new standards of the fair a man must measure himself—and measure himself when at last he is seen to be himself.

Socrates advised us, as the sole path to wisdom, to tread the road that leads to knowledge of ourselves. If only we could obey him! But how shall a man discover himself, veiled as he is by the garment of his flesh? Francis Thompson has warned us that there is a hidden citadel of self, the key whereof hangs at God's girdle alone. We cannot know ourselves; we cannot know each other. But we can have dim surmisings of the forces of evil that lie submerged in us. Every now and then we become aware of what we might do, if we were set free to go to our own place; and then the glimpse is withholden and we walk in loneliness. The tragedy of our living is not only that we are hidden from one another—what man ever opened his heart to his friend?—but that we are mysteries to ourselves. Even St. Paul found himself an insoluble enigma. "The good that I would, I do not," he cried;

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and we can catch the half-indignant tone of complaint in his utterance. We do not know ourselves; and alone we cannot find rest—and never shall, until we rest in the God that understands us.

Now, it may be that the poignancy of the adventure of death lies in this—that thereby we know ourselves at last. In the light of the spiritual world, the man stands out clear to his own eyes, measured in his real being against the standard of Jesus Christ. What wonder that we fear death? What shame it would be if we did not! For in self-knowledge, apart from the cleansing mercy of God, how deep are the possibilities of pain. We pass to a spiritual world. What if our spiritual faculties are all but dead? There, there is “no good of life but love, but love.” What, then, shall the sensualist, or the worldling, or the tyrant, find for his delight? What is there for him to cry, but—

“Which way I fly is hell;  
Myself am hell”?

Certain it is that a soul that finds no delight in God, can expect to find no delight anywhere

in a world in which God is everywhere made plain.

Some have seemed to think that with the passing of the body, the soul will instinctively turn to its true delight; and that in this way death may be an avenue of escape into life. It is true enough that the poor flesh clogs in every way; in mere weariness it spoils our work: in the insistence of its demands it checks our spirits. With it away, may we not hope that the soul will take a sudden flight Godward? We would fain hope so; but what if the body, in its weariness, is a check to evil desire as well as a spur in its hours of energy? Baseness, ultimately, is a thing of the mind; and, maybe, the mind set free from the trammels of the weary flesh will only find itself more energetic in wrong desire than ever. And, then, what stony paths of renunciation will have to be trod, before we become the pure in heart who are able to see God? It will be a long, long trail, indeed.

## IV

At the same time, the love of God remains.

“His *troth* at all times firmly stood,  
And shall, from age to age, endure.”

And love means the instinct to redeem—to the uttermost and to the end. The loneliness and the final pain must have a redemption power in them; or we must confess God partly beaten. After all, there is something in all of us that can respond to God. That one great lesson comes to the Church from this war. “Black’s soul of black, of that I saw no sample.” Beneath the thick layers of the dust of selfishness, the image of God, fashioned by the Great Artificer, remains to be uncovered in every soul. The sheep may stray far, but the Good Shepherd is not easily thwarted in His quest. The mountains in which they wander are high; their chasms are deep. But His patience is infinite; and out through the sleet and the rain He goes, and seeking, seeks on—*until He find*. Wherefore, we may have good hope to comfort us. God is Love. Nevertheless, for us, now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation.



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THE LAST ISSUE

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## CHAPTER VIII

### THE LAST ISSUE

**T**HE hot sun beat down on the shadeless camp all through the summer day, and the heat reflected from white sand and corrugated iron made the air tropical. But though the atmosphere of the long, low hut was stifling, and the service voluntary, yet every seat was packed, and at the back the men stood in a solid mass. Those who could not squeeze in, stood round the open windows. Here was reality; men met to hear a message as from the Unseen. They had already most of them been in the jaws of death, and they would soon return again to the shadow of the great mystery. There was in no eye that expression of patient endurance wherewith the preacher is so often confronted at home. A tense feeling of eagerness pervaded the hut while the preacher sought to marshal the arguments for the victory of life in the very act of death.

Death was only an experience as natural as birth. As the life entering this world found itself at home, so at the next stage would life be at home, with the preparations of love all made for its coming. And the address ended with the last words of Donald Hankey to his platoon ere he led them over the parapet to his death: "Men, if you are wounded it is Blighty; if you are killed it is the resurrection." But at the close the unexpected confronted the preacher. A kilted, grim-faced Scot waited and asked this question: "Do you really believe that every soldier who dies in battle goes to heaven?" His fist was half clenched, but with his thumb he pointed upward. The spirit of all the Puritans glowed in his deep-set eyes. He made it clear that he had no use for such a gospel. He was a Christian and not a Mohammedan. His body was cheap—a shilling a day; his life was cheap—mere fodder for guns; his self-respect required that his soul should not be cheap. And a heaven gained through a splinter of shell would be but a cheap heaven indeed!

## I

It was thus that the preacher found himself up against a question which mere generalities were helpless to solve. The war has brought every question that affects human well-being to an issue; and it lights up to their very depths those realms of religion which aforesaid lay in shadow. The question to which the stern-faced soldier wanted an answer is this—what does really happen to the soldier who dies in battle? In other days the question found a ready answer; the believer went instantly to a heaven of bliss and the unbeliever to a hell of everlasting torment. It was a clear answer, grim, but logically unassailable on the premises. It was an answer which evoked passion in the heart of him who preached. It was his to move men to make a choice on which eternity hung. In those days a man could preach as a dying man to dying men and sweep multitudes before the white heat of conviction into the fold. But few are now able to wield the sword of this stern doctrine. To consign the overwhelming majority of mankind to

such a hell would only argue a malicious God. And it is no longer possible to speak of going down to hell or up to heaven. When the earth was the centre of the universe and the sun and the stars moved round it—that was possible. But now the earth is but a grain of sand in the immensities, and the heavens have become astronomical. There is now neither up nor down! But even if there were, can we conceive the soldier hurled from the hell of battle into an endless hell? Are men who never had a chance on earth to be deprived for ever of any chance? Doubtless many of them are men of sanguinary language and strange deeds; but they are the products of a civilisation that herds men in slums and encircles them with every evil. They lived in grime, how could they be but grimy? Are they to be damned for the grime they did not create? But no grime of man's creation can hide the god-like in them. They laugh at misery; they go down to the earthly hell with a jest; they scorn death to save a comrade; and for dim ideals they lay down life itself right joyously. It is inconceivable, whatever infallible theologians may say, that hell can be the portion of these.

But it is equally inconceivable that lives so stained and marred can "immediately pass into glory." They would be very unhappy if they did; for they would not feel at home. There is so much of good in them that hell cannot be their portion; and so much of evil that heaven cannot at once receive them. What then can be their lot? That is the problem wherewith the soldier whose eyes have the far-off mystic gaze and in whose blood abides still the iron of election and eternal reprobation, confronts the Church to-day, demanding an answer.

## II

There are various Commissions of the Churches indulging in mental Swedish exercises, striving to clarify the ways of God to the mist-dimmed eyes of men. This surely is a question worthy of their grappling. What has become of the soldier whom neither the heaven nor the hell of the pre-war theology can receive? There are seven millions dead, and twenty millions jousting still with death, and no man can see the end. Every other question pales before this of the destiny of

these millions. The revolution made by war in the social organism brings in its train a revolution in the realm of the soul. The Church must find a third category. It must propound not only a doctrine of heaven and of hell but also a doctrine of an intermediate state.

All the facts of life as we know them point to the reasonableness of this third category—of that state after death that cannot be hell, and is not the full triumph over evil that is heaven. For all the processes of God are the slow working of evolution. It took æons—periods of time so vast that the brain reels when it tries to grasp them—for the earth to become solid for the feet of men; and still further æons for the soul to grasp the chasm that separates right and wrong. By what slow and gradual steps did men advance towards the knowledge of God! Ebbtide there as everywhere succeeded the flow; but each floodtide registered a little higher than the one before. There doubtless have been periods of crisis when men advanced towards the stars a thousand leagues in one day. There was such a period nineteen centuries ago, and doubtless

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another such will come again. But the normal working in the development of man is the slow growth that needs not to be hurried because eternity is inexhaustible. And the Unseen Ruler Who reigns here in time is the same Who reigns yonder in the realm that to us is still veiled. He cannot have one law here and another there. If here a man moves towards goodness by gradual evolution, that process will inevitably be continued in the next stage of that road that leads on endlessly beyond the shadow, and beyond our imagination—"the moon-lit, endless way." Just as boys who pass from one school to another take up their tasks where they left off, some lower down and some higher up according to their development, so will it be in the great school of life beyond. There the life suddenly ended on earth, will take up the interrupted task of its discipline and development. The soldier who, like all his comrades, spurned the cheap narcotic that would assure heaven to all men dying in battle was quite right. It is the heroic in the soul that spurns such opiates. But, if the soldier takes up life yonder just as he laid it down here, then this can be further said. The high-

est we know of the Unseen Governor of the universe is a love that will even die for His children. And in the hour of death, these His children, content to be blotted out on earth that their country might live and their kindred be free, touched with groping hands the Father's fairest raiment. They launched forth on the illimitable sea with the course set God-ward. We can say that, and need not shrink from saying it. But what further rocks and shoals imperil the voyage, who can say?

### III

Here the doubt has come whether this answer, which I have so laboriously striven to give to my compatriot's question, would satisfy him. For in some trench, under the stars, there doubtless came to him, through the very vapour of death, such a glimpse of the Righteousness and unswerving Justice throned at the core of things that hell itself became a reality—a necessary provision for the cleansing of the world. Perhaps he felt that, endowed with the gift of freedom, he had an inalienable right to be damned if he chose.

“Am I then deprived of my right as a free man?” he might ask; “is there then no vindication of eternal righteousness—no hell?” Of course there is a hell. It can be seen. Here there is impenetrable barbed wire round about it; everywhere there are the steel walls of isolation shutting in its denizens, be they here or there. There is no glory of sacrifice for the man in hell. It is the impoverished life, empty of good, blinded to the ideal. But as in the hell here, so also in the hell beyond. Even in hell, there can be no complete isolation from God. For hell itself is within the compass of His omnipresence, and the man who makes his bed there at last is brought through anguish to say: “lo, Thou art here.” God is also in hell, and wherever He is He can only be doing one thing—trying to win His children to Himself. That is what is meant by the footnote in history that tells how one went aforetime to preach to the “spirits in prison.” It visualizes the fact that however far the soul may wander, it can never go beyond the reach of the Almighty Arm, or the pleading of His love. It is only a pagan idea that the destiny of immortal souls can be eternally fixed in a

moment of time. The glory of man is that he is free. And his freedom he carries hence. Otherwise death would only transform him into an automaton. He must be free, there as here, to fall away from the road that leads to splendour; free also to lift his eyes heavenward in the midst of hell—free, even there, to say: “I will arise and go to my Father.” And in the long, long end God will win. The eternal harmony will at last be broken by the crying of not even one lost soul. Though the road for many leadeth to hell, it goes through it and cannot end there.

#### IV

If these things be true (or rather if they be in the way of the truth, for what the absolute truth itself is no man knoweth) then a further question emerges—that of our duty towards the dead. If their eternal destiny be not fixed unalterably in that moment of time when the soul parts from the body; if God be still striving to win them to Himself and to lead them to the clearer vision and the more excellent glory; then, surely, they are not passed

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beyond the sphere of our help nor the reach of our prayers. They are still bound up with us in the fellowship of one common faith. "Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or whether we die we die unto the Lord." Those who die and those who live are serving the one Lord; in heaven and on earth the rapture of faith is one: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing." And the fullness of their felicity is dependent upon us, for God has so ordained that "apart from us they should not be made perfect."

We can realise this dependence of the dead on the living when we think how they are watching the course of that great conflict in which they laid down their lives. We are left to wage the fight surrounded by the dead: "the great cloud of witnesses." If our courage failed and our spirit flagged, so that the cause of the world's freedom was lost through an indecisive peace, there would be for them the sense of failure, the knowledge that they had died in vain. Without us, therefore, they cannot be made perfect in the felicity of triumph

over the evil that threatens to overwhelm the world. Were all other motives to fail this would fire our hearts and steel our wills—the motive of loyalty to the dead. The seer heard the souls under the altar cry with a great voice saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth. . . . And it was said unto them that they should rest yet a little while, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren which should be killed even as they were, should have fulfilled their course.” The consummation of the felicity of the dead thus depends on those still left on earth and on the manner in which they shall face the last enemy—death.

But the duty to the dead cannot be restricted to our carrying to a triumphant issue the cause for which they died. As Christians it involves far more than that. If prayer be the mightiest weapon placed in our hands, we dare not restrict its power merely to the aid of the living. For the dead also are still on the same great stream of life as we are. And they, too, need the shepherding and the shielding of God.

We realise in some dim way how prayer on

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behalf of the living can help and inspire. And there is the same reason for thinking that prayer can help the dead. For prayer is the unloosening of the Divine energy. And the dead are as the living, within the fold of the one enveloping God. If a mother's prayer may mean that a new inspiration can come to her son in the trenches, and a new resolve to follow after God, surely a mother's prayer may also mean a fuller sense of God coming to her son within the veil; and if he be far away, the resolution may rise in his heart: "I will arise and go to my Father."

We know regarding the dead that they pray for the living; for we read of "the golden vials full of odours which are the prayers of saints." And this is so natural that we instinctively know it to be true. The mother who prayed for her children on earth, goes on praying for them in heaven. It is impossible that death could congeal the prayers of love on her lips. If through their prayers there come to us hope and vision and guidance, how dare we cease directing the forces of prayer towards them? For they are not yet perfected. For them, too, difficulties may emerge, and stretches of

dim valleys may have to be passed. If they be still free (and we cannot think that death can so pauperise as to make men mere automata) they may still have to face peril. For heaven is not a place where men cannot sin, but rather a place where they do not want to sin. And we cannot err in that—in asking for our beloved dead that they may never more want to sin.

One may well have doubts regarding prayer being of any efficacy in behalf of the dead. But there is no room for doubting that such prayer would be a great help to the living themselves who would thus pray. For it would mean that Immortality would emerge from the shadowy realm to which we have consigned it, and become again a great reality. For many the hope of Immortality ceased to be of value, and heaven ceased to be an operating factor in life, and this came because the living cut themselves off from the dead. How does any place that we have never seen become real to us? It is when persons we love go hither and we keep in touch with them. For many a mother far away among the voiceless hills, the city she has never seen is real

because her son is there. She too walks its streets, and her spirit moves amid the throngs, because her heart is ever with him. But if on the day he left home the iron gateway closed and no messages passed from her to him or from him to her, the city of his dwelling would be a mere shadow to her. And that is how heaven no longer is real. We have allowed the gates to close; the dead are shut out from our lives; no message goes from us, and they are isolated by the barriers which we erect. That earth may again be made radiant for us with the glory of immortality we must open the windows of the soul towards our dead. We must direct our thought, our will, our love toward them in the great stream of prayer. Then will the life beyond the shadow of death shine forth again refulgent upon our souls, and everything on earth shall appear but small and valueless compared to that radiance of deathless life shining from the gates ajar. To this there is an objection which may seem insuperable to some. It is that in other ages great evils sprang from prayers for the dead. And no doubt this was so. But great evils sprang from other sources also, yet we did not

dam up these sources for ever. Preaching has often been misused, but the Word is still proclaimed, living and powerful. The Sacrament of our Lord's Body and Blood has been at times violently dealt with and made the minister of superstition, but the Table has ever continued to be spread in the wilderness and the souls of men have ever been fed with the living bread. And if prayers for the dead have meant at times indulgences and an unholy traffic, that is no excuse why we should cease from such prayers for ever. We have come to such a stage of discernment that we can surely distinguish between the pure gold and the base accretions that dim its shining. To continue doing violence to one of the noblest instincts of the heart is to surrender a prerogative of the soul to the memory of evils long vanished. This is not the time to allow the dead hand of far-away abuses to stifle our souls. The heart of the people has passed beyond that stage. Multitudes to-day pray for their dead in an agony of supplication who never before prayed even for the living; and the Church must give expression to this yearning of their souls.

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Whatever the theorisings of theologians may say, the heart of man settles this matter. And the heart sends out its cry beyond the portal of death, and seeks to bless and succour its own.

“Were I hanged on the highest hill,  
Mother o’ mine, mother o’ mine,  
I know whose love would follow me still,  
Mother o’ mine, mother o’ mine.

“Were I damned both body and soul,  
Mother o’ mine, mother o’ mine.  
I know whose prayers would make me whole,  
Mother o’ mine, mother o’ mine.”

This is the cry of the heart, and the heart is in life and death a safer guide than syllogisms. “Wherefore let our voice rise like a fountain for them night and day.”



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## THE CHURCH

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## CHAPTER IX

### THE CHURCH

**I**T would be idle to pretend that the majority of our soldiers are in any vital connection with the Church; and it would be as idle to deny that a large number have various criticisms to offer concerning its present condition. Both these facts must give pause to all zealous Churchmen, to whatever communion they belong. For with our soldiers we are not dealing with any particular class, but with the young manhood of the nation; and if they are, as they are, in considerable proportion aloof from and critical of the great Christian society, there is probably room for improvement in the society as well as in them. Much of the criticism, no doubt, is paltry and misinformed. "The wealth of the clergy" (as distinguished from bishops) was once made a ground of complaint—a not very stable ground in fact. But, beyond all such types of objection, there remained the solid facts that the Church had

apparently failed to hold within herself her own baptized members, and that a vague irritation with her as ineffectual was singularly prevalent.

Nor was this peculiar to the private soldier. I have been a member of several messes, and discovered the same attitude of neglect of the Church as a living force very frequent in the minds of officers. One began to understand why, apart from scriptural grounds, the Church is described as "she." Not that, as an institution, the Church arouses violent hostility. Worse than that, she may be ignored. Her continued existence on the whole seemed to be desired. She provides a source of agreeable soothing in the midst of sterner and more real experiences. She offers a something, to which a gentleman should have a chance of turning, every now and then. After all, babies have to be christened; people have to be married; there are such things as funerals; and an organisation should exist for the rites of religion, that they may be conducted in a graceful kind of way. But when it comes to matters of living importance, then High Finance is a serious thing; the great political parties are serious

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things; the Labour movement is a very serious thing—but the Church matters not at all. The fact is, these men are not afraid of the Church; though days were once when its word was a word of power.

Elsewhere, there was to be found a deeper note of separation—a hint of a disappointment with an institution which might be so potent and seemed so impotent. The social inequalities that persist; the rampant evils, which are apparently attacked only with words; the war itself—all these were quoted against the Church as a force. And with reason; for if Christianity is anything it is a power. “The power of God unto salvation” was the challenging description of it given long ago by the most virile of all Christians. And organised Christianity ought to be the strongest organised power in the world. Whereas, at present, it frankly is not; and men, who wish that it were, are impatient of its impotence. “Jesus Christ I revere,” said a man once, “but I’m sick of the Church.”

One of the noblest descriptions of the ideal Church ever penned is given in terms of Art. The writer conceived of a vast Temple, fash-

ioned of living stones, based upon one foundation surely laid, which is Jesus Christ—which, in its great distances and noble proportions might be fit habitation for God Himself; a building worthy of the Most High. Thus certain tests may be applied to the Church as we know it, whereby we may discover some of the directions in which the structure has gone awry. For good art may be discussed by the application of the tests of Fitness, Economy (which includes Liberality) and Sympathy. If the Church cannot pass these tests, she is not the noble building of which the Apostle dreamed; and we must set ourselves to reconstruction in the aspects wherein, by them, she is proved to fail.

## I

If we would judge of the worth of any object of art, we must first ask ourselves what end it is intended to serve. If it is not adequate to that end—if it has no “functional beauty”—as a piece of art it is a failure. Its end, indeed, may simply be loveliness and nothing else—like that amazing tower of Giotto’s

in Florence, that springs like a flower from the earth, and by the delight that it gives to the eye alone justifies itself. But most creations of man serve more mundane purposes; and, however mundane they be, it is by these purposes that first they must be judged. A chair, for instance, may be most cunningly inlaid with ivory; but it is a bad chair, unless a man can sit on it. A clock may be ornamented with excellent skill in all manner of precious metals; but what we first demand of a clock is that it should tell the time; and, if the decorations render the reading of the time difficult, they are bad decorations. An honest locomotive, constructed at Derby or Crewe, may be held to be a much more artistic creation than a dining table, whose legs are carved with all manner of carvings, round which no one can sit in decent comfort to dine.

First, then, we are to get a grip of the end for which any given object is fashioned; and we ask, what is the Church *for*? She has a purpose, surely; by her adequacy to the purpose let her stand or fall.

Now, the statement of her purpose is simple. It is threefold. First, she exists to worship

God; next, to develop Christian life amongst Christians; and, third, to extend Christ's kingdom. In proportion as she does these things, she passes the first test suggested by the conception of her as a Temple.

Few will take exception to the statement that the first duty of the Church is to worship God; nor will many deny that that is a supremely important and valuable function. On the whole, the Church has aimed at meeting its responsibilities here. The Sunday services have been the occasions when the Church has insisted on its pre-eminence over other organisations claiming the attention of the community; and the strength of the clergy and ministers has very considerably been expended in making these services as living and genuine as they knew how to make them.

At the same time, weakness has been shown here; and we may not be too confident that the war has not increased the difficulties which oppose the great worship-purpose of the Church. In pre-war days, a tendency was shown in some communions to use the Sunday Service as an opportunity, not merely for the advancement of the claims of a sect, but for ac-

tive party-political propaganda. Elsewhere, respect for the traditions of the fathers had reduced what ought to be the living vividness of worship to a deadly dreariness, which was a burden to the spirit. Both of these tendencies were rightly disastrous, for they were adversely affecting the first purpose for which the Church exists. Many of us may not agree with the aims of some of our fellow-Christians in the Anglican Church; but we cannot but admit that they have done a service to us all in emphasising the first-class importance of worship in itself. They have helped to recreate in British minds a sense of the necessity of the "worshipfulness of worship"; and, while some of us may think that in their emphasis on the means they have forgotten the end, and that care for the symbol may obscure the great principle that all true worship must be in spirit and in truth, none of us can deny that they have done us admirable service in calling us back from an emphasis on passing ecclesiastical squabbles, or on political questions about which our prejudices are keen, to a remembrance of the fact that in worshipping God it is God that we are worshipping; and that no effort

after living dignity and beauty in that enterprise is misplaced or ill-spent.

The need for the witness thus borne is not passing away with the war. Indeed, in some ways it is only being accentuated. We may confidently expect a large demand for "bright" services in days to come, of the P. S. A. type, on the ground that only thus can we hold the men; and evidence will not be lacking to support the contention. The conditions of divine worship on active service are wholly abnormal, even in the base camps; and there has been an almost inevitable yielding to the tendency to make the voluntary services, at least, as entertaining as possible. The men are tired, and the unnaturalness and monotony of the conditions in which they live call for something of a very free and easy kind if they are to be attracted on a Sunday evening into a hut for divine worship. Therefore let us have a religious sing-song, and an address, which should be earnest, but must be spicy. There can be no question that these informal religious gatherings have often been enormously successful from the point of view of numbers. A good band, and a speaker with skill in address-

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ing men, who does not disdain the frequent use of humour, will pack a hut anywhere with soldiers. The inference drawn is that the Church has to learn its lesson here. For the future, the older dignities and beauties of worship must be jettisoned; and services which are a cross between a prayer-meeting and an entertainment put in their place.

Nor need we imagine that this plea will be unsupported by returning soldiers themselves. Many of them frankly enjoy the kind of excitement and freedom that a crowded service in a hut affords. The addresses, moreover, have been largely of a sort to attract their attention. Specially selected men have been giving their whole time to the work, often men of real power, and always men with a gift of striking and entertaining speech, who never forget that the first and last commandment for a speaker is "thou shalt not be dull." Consequently, when the soldier returns to his little village church, and hears the still pleasantness of Evensong, or the solemn quiet of a Highland service, together with a sermon during which he may conceivably become drowsy, he may very likely make unfavourable contrasts

with what he remembers of Sunday evenings in France. The appetite for anything that excites is easily developed, and a demand is quite certain to arise for the scrapping of the restraints of worship, and the introduction of services the chief aim of which is cheeriness.

Against that attitude of mind, those who care for the real work of the Church must be on their guard. The assumptions on which the demand will be based are themselves unsound. For the chief of them is that you must estimate the value of an act of worship by counting heads. A manifest fallacy, which has done enough harm to worship already. That there is a real religious value of an evangelistic type in such services no one who has seen much of them can deny. But that it is proportionate to the audience no one can justly assert. The huts are filled not by worshippers, but by men who are all dressed up and have nowhere to go. A well-known Scottish chaplain commented with gratification on the huge audience that awaited him one evening, to a fellow-countryman who stood by the door as he entered. "Och! we'd gang onywhere on a nicht like this," was the reply. In abnormal conditions

abnormal methods must be used; but for the steady work of the Church in days of peace, the ageless objects must be kept steadily in view. And the first object of the Church is not to "cater" for the men. It is to worship God—the God Who inhabits eternity, whose Name is holy. And we may be perfectly certain that all the graver sections of our returning men, those sections that will count for religion in days to come, are expecting to find the note of solemn reverence and of mystery deepened in the public rites of the Church. They have learned much of the strange wonder of life; they have come close to its solemnities; and they know that the God of life is a great God, high and lifted up. While we may easily attract the thoughtless by cheaper methods (provided the local picture-house is not open), we shall alienate those who are the backbone of the nation if we turn away from the dignity which should mark our approach to God.

Let the Church, then, first set itself to a great enterprise of worship. The form is a small thing, compared with the spirit; but the form should express the spirit. Reverence,

solemnity, devotion, dignity—these must be there. Let art give of the best it can: let each worshipper, in his prepared heart, give of the best he can; so that as each Lord's Day comes, every one who enters a House of God shall not leave it without having had brought back to his remembrance that the Lord is great and greatly to be feared.

When we consider the other ends of the Church, anxieties no less justified arise. We have evidently failed to deepen the Christian life of Christian people as we should—else why is it that such an experience as the war has not developed a keener religious spirit? And we have failed, considerably, to keep our own young people. Many of those whose attachment to the Church is of the slackest were brought up in touch with Church life. What is necessary here is a great increase of lay pastoral work. A minister of a large parish cannot possibly be in that close and intimate touch with his young people that is so desirable. The Scottish system of the eldership affords the best hope for intimate work. But it must be a real, and not a paper, eldership. To secure that, it must be largely augmented.

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The best men to undertake the work are nearly always very busy men; and they have not time to assist their minister in pastoral work over large areas. But they can interest themselves in, say, a dozen families. If lay assistance could be secured to this extent much might be done to watch growing boys and girls, and to keep the minister in touch with cases where he can be of most service. Certain it is that pastoral work of that kind must be greatly increased in the days that lie ahead, and that the ministry cannot overtake it all.

An at least equally important point for consideration is whether the various branches of the Church are making the right use of the Holy Communion. The opinions of chaplains and other clerical workers amongst soldiers contradict each other on many points as to the effect the war has had on the religious life of fighting-men, but there is an impressive agreement that the great Sacrament has come to signify more to them, and that Presbyterian and Nonconformist communions must alter their practices in relation to it. It has come to be seen afresh as the supremest of all occasions in the ordinary life of the Church, in

which a man may draw nigh to God and be satisfied of the Real Presence of his Saviour. In the quaint words of an Edinburgh preacher of long ago, whereas by the Word we have hold of Christ as it were betwixt our finger and our thumb, in the Sacrament we get hold of Him with our whole hand. It is recognised as an unique opportunity of obtaining "singular medicine for sick souls." Here, again, we are indebted to Anglicanism for restoring the central Christian rite to its proper place, although there seem to be tendencies at present within that branch of the Church which are undoing the good that has been done. Choral celebrations, with few or no communicants, especially if they oust matins from their rightful place on Sunday morning, are a mishandling of the Lord's Supper. They make it an act of worship chiefly; which, indeed, it is, but by no means solely. It is an occasion when Christian people may, by faith, partake of the Body and Blood of Christ; and a Communion apart from communicants is a contradiction in terms. At the same time, members of the Scottish Church and the English Nonconformist Churches have need to consider whether their

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habit of comparatively infrequent opportunity of participating is not injurious to their Church life. In Scotland, the practice of four or six celebrations is still frequent. That seems almost the worst arrangement that can be devised. Either hold the Sacrament very rarely, say twice a year, and make it the culmination of a series of special services, as is still done in the Highlands; or have it very frequently, so that when a man is heavy-hearted he can immediately turn thereto for healing and new hope. Our branches of the Church are supposed to be rooted in the Word and the Sacraments; but at present, it is on the weekly Word and the occasional Sacrament that we found ourselves.

Moreover, why should Holy Communion be hedged about with all the ecclesiastical barbed-wire which at present fences it? There is much to be said for the open Communion. The purity of Church membership can be secured in endless other ways than by using entrance to the Lord's Table as the test. Why should the responsibility for the genuineness of participation not be laid upon the communicant rather than on the Church? Why should

the invitation to partake not be to all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity and in truth? There is something almost grotesque in the little tickets that have to be presented in Scottish churches by intending communicants before they can take their places in the church. There is something more than grotesque in the English rule that only Anglican members can receive the Bread and Wine. As if the Lord's Table were by law established only for those who see eye to eye with the skilful compromisers who kept the Reformation in England somewhere in the safe middle between Yea and Nay. The love of God is very wide: the sacred elements are its symbol; the blood-red wine is for sinners that are in distress, and desire help; and it is hard to understand why the Church should be at such pains to keep the needy back from the supplies that can satisfy them that hunger and thirst for a worthier life, and a greater progress in grace in days to come.

One thing is certain; many a returning soldier, remembering days when death was his near companion, and the help that came to him from little Communion services, at which none

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of the restrictions held good, will ask from his Church wide and ample opportunities to strengthen his soul around the Table, that he may be enabled to keep the vows which, on the field of battle, he paid unto the Lord.

## II

And now to return to our original image, leaving, for the moment, consideration of the third end of the Church—the extension of the kingdom. An object of art deserves its title, not only if it passes the test of fitness—the test, that is to say, of being adequate to the end which it was fashioned to serve. It also must pass the tests of Economy and of Sympathy. For our present purposes we may take these two together. Both deal with the use and treatment of material. The former signifies that the material must be proportionately used; the latter that it shall be sympathetically treated. If, for instance, on a brass chandelier, there is a mass of ornamentation that overloads, that is a waste of good brass, though each piece of ornamentation considered alone may be not displeasing; and the whole fails

when tested by the principle of Economy. But Economy includes Liberality; while there must not be too much, there must be enough. The most famous offender against this canon was the boatswain who spoiled the ship for want of a pennyworth of tar. He may have been a good boatswain; but he was a bad artist.

On the other hand, the test of sympathy is a very subtle one. It asks that the artificer shall understand the nature of the material in which he works; that he shall have studied its capabilities, and have trained his eye and hand to make the most of them. Iron must be treated in one way; wood in another; granite and sandstone need different handling from one another, and both from marble. *A fortiori*, the treatment to be accorded to all these is distinct from that which is due to flesh and blood.

And how does the Temple which is the Church come out of it, when tested by these principles? The only answer that can be given by any loyal son of the Church is one of humiliation and shame. Wild prodigality of material is seen in one place; the poorest kind of scrimping in another, and that where

liberality is most needed. And the material itself is abused. Probably in no sphere of life are there so many square pegs in round holes as in the Church, having been placed there in the name of a spurious democracy. There are men all over Britain, who began a Christian ministry with high hopes and a genuine, wistful desire to work for the kingdom, who now carry on with the dogged look on their faces of the man whose blessedness it is to expect nothing. And yet these men might be happy and useful elsewhere; but the Church has no machinery for transplanting them. And as they suffer, so their members suffer with them; and the Church as a whole is devitalised.

Now, there is one root cause of the former evil, that of the uneconomic use of Christian material. And that lies in our miserable divisions. One of the first duties of a Christian man is to work for Christian unity. The results of division are becoming tragic, both in England and Scotland. In the latter country, I know of a population of probably less than 2,000 ministered to by six churches, which hate each other heartily in the name of principle; and on the other side of the picture there is

Glasgow, with needs that cry aloud to heaven for wise and co-operative effort, which at present, in many of its districts, is all but untouched, despite much honest effort. The Church is a lop-sided Temple in Scotland. And who will say that things are better in England? Notoriously, the divisions are legion: each one struggling for its own life, when all should be struggling for the Kingdom of God.

Fortunately, this night of division is yielding to the dawn. Already, the mountain-tops are touched with rosy fingers. Men are coming to realise that schism is a sin; and the grace of God is enabling us to overcome even our prejudices. We are beginning to see that obstinacy is not necessarily strength, and that occasionally, what we call fidelity to ecclesiastical principle is only another name for obduracy. We *must* be united, or confess ourselves beaten by the devil. In our enterprises for union, we shall find much help from soldiers. They have seen our divisions from afar off, and seen them small. It was sometimes delightful, and sometimes almost pitiful, to remark how tiny seemed our Scottish walls of partition in

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France; and often a kind of rage came into the heart that they were permitted to continue for another day. Certainly, the soldiers took no heed of them, and all the influence they have will be cast for their demolition.

At the same time, we have to acknowledge that they are there, and that they will not fall, like the walls of Jericho, by the mere blowing of trumpets. Grandiose schemes of complete Christian unity are constructed only of the fabric of a dream. One golden rule must be observed. Each branch of the Church must unite with that which is nearest to it: and thus, slowly, the scattered fragments may be gathered together. And for that work we have the inspiration of an immediate clamant call—the call of the east-end of great cities. It is a moral monstrosity that little communities should retain men and substance in rivalry, when the great multitudes are starving for the bread of life. The dream of social reconstruction contains within it the necessity for the readjustment of Christian agencies according to the new needs of the land. And these can only rightly be secured in proportion to the banishment of ecclesiastical competition.

Every Christian patriot must be a worker for Christian unity.

Meantime, the war is serving this end in providing unique opportunities for men of different ecclesiastical outlooks coming to know each other. Some of our separations are partly due to lack of social intermingling; and the fact that Anglicans, Presbyterians, Baptists are flung together, not only in the Army, but in the work of the huts, is wholly to the good. It is not an uncommon spectacle to see a High Church priest, who at home wears a biretta and has the "six points" in his church, and a Baptist minister, who is a passive resister, stoking boilers together at four o'clock in the morning, in order to provide tea for troops going up the line. They come to know each other and to respect each other, and ultimately to discuss churchmanship together. Not that they come to any conclusion; both remain of the same opinion still; but their intercourse has sown a seed of personal regard which may bear fair flowers in later days.

Moreover, experience in co-operation has taught us to avoid one dangerous pitfall—to wit, that Christian unity can be furthered on

undenominational lines. A considerable number of earnest people at one time imagined that it was possible to obtain corporate action on the basis of the points on which all Christians are agreed: and that an undenominational form of service could be discovered in which all could unite. That has proved an illusion. The undenominational service turned out to be a watered-down Nonconformist service; and the least common factor of all the sections of the Church, which was to be the basis of the united Church of the future, proved to be a singularly minute factor ecclesiastically. Hence have we learned that there is only one hope for ultimate re-union in England; namely, that Episcopal and non-Episcopal Churches should be true to themselves, each giving their separate contributions to the common weal with both hands earnestly; on the understanding that each wishes the other God-speed in its work for the kingdom. It will be a great gain to the religious atmosphere of Britain if, seeing that serious differences exist, we can *agree* to differ. It is one thing to say, "this is my Church; and let all others be as the Samaritans": and quite another to say, "this

is my Church, and I will give it my heart's best service; but that is my brother's Church, and may God use him and it for His kingdom!" It is one thing to announce, scornfully, "I take this way, which is the only right way; if you take that way, we part company for good": and quite another to grip your fellow-Christian's hand, saying, "I take this way, for I can no other; you take that way, for you can no other; but both go in a similar direction: please God, they will meet a little further on." It will make a vital difference to England, if Anglican and Nonconformist can regard each other thus in the future. The war, certainly, has given both a wonderful chance to look at each other with the eyes of a new charity.

It is always well to give honour where honour is due; and no one who knows the facts can deny that much of the credit for the better atmosphere of understanding which is being created lies at the door of an institution, which is not a Church, and does not claim to be one, but the desire of which is to serve all Churches—namely, the Y. M. C. A. That organisation possesses a very valuable asset in the good-will of literally millions of soldiers;

and it might easily have erected itself into an institution apart from the Churches, or, to state the matter more accurately, as a rival Church, framed on simpler lines than those already existing. Men were beginning to think of it almost as a Church; some, for instance, entered themselves on cards, on which they had to state their denominational allegiance, as belonging to the Y. M. C. A. But its sagacious leaders decided against any such policy, and determined instead that it should put itself and its resources at the service of the whole Church, offering every communion equal facilities within its doors; making itself not undenominational, or extra-denominational, but inter-denominational, in the truest sense of that term. Thereby, it has drawn into its ranks clergy and members of all manner of branches of the Church, and has proved, by actual experiment, the feasibility of co-operation on denominational lines. Inasmuch as, after the war, it will possess enormously enhanced prestige and be able to draw upon vast reserves of support, churchmen of various schools should consider seriously how far they can use it under peace conditions to assist ulti-

mate unity. An institution that, in fact as well as in name, is the common meeting-place of Anglicans and non-Anglicans, neither of whom belittle their ecclesiastical position by availing themselves of its facilities, would be an enormous gain to the country—and, not least in the smaller town, in the times of stress for religion that are sure to come with peace. If the Church neglects the help which such an organisation can give towards unity she will have much to answer for.

One grave point, however, remains to be considered. The union of the two great branches of Presbyterianism in Scotland must be a thing of to-morrow, and English Non-conformity may be at least federated the day after. A kindlier spirit of understanding and willingness to co-operate is already showing itself between both these branches of the Church and the Church of England; but not much will be done in developing it, and there may be rapid retrogression to the old attitude of suspicious rivalry, if the question of inter-communion is not settled. If we cannot meet before the altar, our courtesies are a mere thin

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vener covering hostilities that is serious indeed.

Here again the soldier may help us. He is a plain, blunt man, unversed in ecclesiastical subtleties; but he has a keen sense of the common-sense of things. And I am convinced that the vast majority of genuine Anglicans in the army would never dream that it was unseemly for, let us say, a Presbyterian to share with them in their celebration; or that they were committing mortal sin in participating in a celebration according to the Scottish usage. As a matter of fact, the exigencies of active service have often compelled things of the kind to be done; and I hardly met an Anglican priest who, when faced with the question whether he would refuse the Sacrament to a Presbyterian soldier going into battle, who could not reach a chaplain of his own persuasion, replied in the negative. I have myself received the Sacrament in France at the hands of an Anglican clergyman, along with an admixture of English Wesleyans, Congregationalists and Baptists. Again and again I asked friends of my own, some of them

extreme High Churchmen, whether they would refuse me if I presented myself, and the worst answer I received was, "Don't ask me, but come." To many the fact that permission is not strictly according to rule seemed a real distress. Why should it not be made clear and explicit that the Bread and Wine in an English Church are as free to members of other Christian communions as they are, let us say, in St. Giles' Cathedral in Edinburgh? Why should the great, sane, charitable heart of the Church of England allow its impulses to be checked at the bidding of the few extremists who dream—vain dream!—first of a union with Rome, before there can be union with the Communion of their own fellow-countrymen, who share in the traditions and the freedom that make Britain great? It is at least true that the present condition of things is the most serious of all menaces to unity; the feelings engendered by the exclusiveness of the Church of England in this matter act like an acrid poison in the veins of the Body of Christ in our land. We can never be one—we can never in any deep sense know the blessedness of religious charity—until we can truly meet together to

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do what the Lord Himself bade us do in remembrance of Him.

### III

We have left to the close the consideration of the third end for which the Church exists, that of extending the Kingdom of God; inasmuch as its realisation depends greatly on the achievement of union. This object is a supreme one for the Church; and she must take strict account of her stewardship in this matter. It is here that the unspoken criticism of the soldier makes itself felt most; especially, perhaps, amongst men who in private life would tend to belong to the Labour movement. It is true that Labour as an international force has proved itself as impotent as anything else in this war. The German Socialist has shown that he is a German first and an international Socialist a long way after. But two blacks do not make a white; and, in any case, men seem to feel, justly, that the Church has made more pretension to be the healer of the world's sores than any other institution, and may therefore be the more legitimately criticised.

In a vague way she is blamed for not having been more successful in cleansing the Augean stables of modern European civilisation.

Here, as in other directions, criticism is not entirely according to knowledge. Little account seems to be taken of the severity of the opposition which any society endeavouring to further the aim of Christ has to encounter. That the heart of man is deceitful and desperately wicked is not allowed for: nor is credit given for the heroic and chivalrous efforts that the Church has made. The imagination seldom seems to have attempted a portrayal of a modern Europe without the Church: nor was there anything like adequate acknowledgment of that Christian romance, so much of it lying in the nineteenth century, which is the story of Foreign Missions. But the fact that there is so much disappointment, half-sad, half-resentful, with the Church as a social and political power, is one that we all must reckon with: and from it we must draw inferences, which may lead to our zealous amendment.

The deeper criticisms on the Church are not often made explicit by soldiers; but more than one observer will tell us that, though unspoken,

they are there. I have very little doubt that many a man, if he would open his mind, would acknowledge that he is disappointed with the Church because her members are not spiritual enough: and would attribute her lack of social power to that fact. When criticism of that kind comes, especially from men who have offered their bodies as living ramparts that we may continue in life, what can we do but bow the head and ask for God's mercy and for His help in days to come that we may, individually, show more of the spirit of the Master? It is true that He works through us; and it is tragically true that He has His treasure in very earthen vessels. The aggressive work of the Church is continually being rendered arduous by the Church herself. Professing Christians often block the path of Christianity. It is a truism, but it is a fact that should startle us all the more for that, that the efficacy of the Church, as an instrument to extend Christ's kingdom, depends on the spiritual vitality of the individual Christian. Let us all get ourselves to prayer; and may God help us, and send us His Spirit.

But, while we humbly and with repentance

acknowledge the fundamental necessity for a renewal of vital religion in each professing Christian as the prime condition of effectual aggressive work of the Church, we see also other amendments to which we must set our hand. We must seek not only to be renovated as individuals: we must see to it that as a Society we are employing our resources in the right way. We must ask ourselves what weapons we have for use in our warfare, and whether they are being used aright. There are two, in particular, which ought to be strong in our hands—the weapon of truth and the weapon of the moral sense of good men. With these as sword and spear, though an host were encamped against us, we need not be afraid.

One of the greatest texts in the Gospel of St. John implies that men that know the truth shall be made free. The liberty which the Church comes to bring to mankind is dependent upon the reception by mankind of the truth which she is to proclaim. Wherefore, let her proclaim it. There is in certain quarters a dangerous reaction against the ministry of the Word. Preaching is belittled, and a ceremonial is offered in its place. The Sacraments

are exalted at the expense of the Word instead of sharing an equal dignity. Some of the clergy speak as if Christ's last command was, "Go ye into all the world and baptize"; whereas His instruction was, "Go ye into all the world and preach." The baptizing is put into a participial clause. In the early days St. Peter and some others with him began the extension of Christianity by preaching; and the Church has not yet found an aggressive method to supersede his. We shall never move forward if we hesitate to declare the faith by which we live.

But we must constantly be watching the subject-matter of our preaching. If there is an Anglican danger of minimising the importance of preaching, there is a Nonconformist danger of making it trivial. What we are to be at is the proclamation of the truth that makes free. It is the great themes that we must dwell on. There are enough of them and to spare. Sin, Forgiveness, Redemption, the Indwelling Spirit, Love, Eternal Life—all the great words that deal with the relation between the soul and God—have to be made living realities to men. The story of the Cross

has to be told and re-told: has to be brooded upon and seen in its universal significance and then declared with passion and with faith. A prophetic ministry that is concerned with the eternal things is a vital necessity. Most men who have done religious work with the armies recognise that the most eager attention is given to speech about the largest subjects. The men are hungry and need bread; and it is poor work to offer them pastry. The ministry must take up its prophetic task anew, and be content with nothing less than the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Men who have gazed with open eyes on death have a right to demand no less from those who would be their spiritual guides.

Still further, if the Church is to be aggressive as she may be she must mobilize and concentrate the force of the moral sense of the community. This she fails to do at present for two reasons: first, because she is a house divided against herself, and, second, because so much of the strongest goodness in the land is without her borders. To overcome the former difficulty, she must seek union; to overcome the

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latter, she must reconsider her attitude to her creeds.

If no other impetus to Christian unity were needed, the spectacle of the divided moral counsels of Christendom would lead us to seek it. To take the Scottish example, we at present possess two chief courts of the Church, meeting at the same time within a few yards of each other in Edinburgh. A public question—let us say on education—is before them both at the same hour; and diametrically opposite resolutions may be passed by the two in the name of religion. Where is the voice of the Church? If only the two were one, and could (as they would, if they were one) hammer out a common course of action, Demos and his at present grinning crew of followers would begin to think of the moral power of Christianity in a new way. Only by united action can the worldly forces, which for so long have piped the tune to which our civilisation has danced, be made afraid of the Church of Christ. And it is high time that they were afraid. It will be a great day for Britain when the Church will be again a terror to evil-

doers and the public opponent in public affairs of all who put profit before justice, and money in place of God. And the sign-post, which points us to that consummation, directs us first to the place where we shall be made one.

But the Church does not contain, by any means, all the moral energy of the community within her membership; although the testimony of a man who cannot be called a Christian must not be forgotten. "All the finest people I have known—the kind of people to whom I would go in trouble—have been Christian," he said. Nevertheless, much moral energy is at present beyond her borders; and it seems clear that her attitude to her creeds is in part the cause. Is there no hope that, through her present experiences, the Church may be induced to learn a little and to forget still more? Is the only result of the war to be that the Wesleyans, let us say, are to be more attached than ever to the details of the views expressed in John Wesley's sermons, and the Catholic party in the Church of England to become permanently convinced of the plenary philosophic inspiration of Aquinas? And are we in Scotland to admit that all the light

there is streams between the bars of the Westminster Confession, with the assistance of Declaratory Acts and Formulæ of subscription? Surely the agony of the years has taught us otherwise. We are but children, looking out on a perplexing world, as were our fathers before us; and we are only beginning to learn the unsearchable riches of Christ. The faith by which we live is a very simple thing; its intellectual implications are universal. We hold to the faith, but we must be prepared to admit that we, and those who went before us, may have made mistakes as to the inferences to be drawn therefrom as to the construction of the Universe. The late Principal Denney of Glasgow was no light challenger of the faith. No man of his time gained more completely the confidence of devout Scotland. Yet it was he who pleaded for a very simple expression of faith as alone binding upon members of the Church. "I believe in God, through Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord and Saviour," was the formula he suggested. The creeds and confessions were to be kept as the great, historic attempts to develop the intellectual implications of the statement of simple faith.

They hold the ground, until the Church, led by God's Spirit, can amend or supplement them. She will wait a long time before she can improve on the Nicene Creed. But the statement of the faith in which men face life and death ought to be simpler than any of the historic creeds; and it is that statement which ought to link all Christians together.

At any rate, many a man, who shrinks from our articles, or even frankly charges us with dishonesty in regard to them, would be in our ranks if some such formula were all to which his subscription was asked. And without these men, many of them amongst the strongest we have, the Church as a moral power in the land cannot be made perfect. Is it too much to hope that the Church will admit to her ranks all those who honour and serve her Lord?

If only the Christianity of the world could be unified within the Church, the day of great peace would have dawned. But that is not yet come. Still, the Reformed Church of Britain may set an example by gathering all the Christian forces of her people into one channel. It is worth the effort and the prayer of all who care for their land. Some indeed—

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especially a well-known writer, versed in the souls of bishops—seem to think that Christianity must get outside the Church to become strong. As if the first result would not be the creation of a new Church. No—the Church is strong as she is ancient, and though she be assailed and, at a time, defeated, she has within her a principle of life drawn from her living Head. Broken, divided, distressed, still she is the Church of Christ, and she will be used of Him and strengthened by Him, till the nations shall be gathered within her, and she, the Church victorious, shall be the Church at rest.



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THE LAST JUDGMENT

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## CHAPTER X

### THE LAST JUDGMENT

**T**HERE is no truth the Church needs to emphasise more in these days than the truth that God, the Maker of all things, is also the Judge of all men. For the thought of judgment and the fear of punishment have been well-nigh effaced from the consciousness of this generation. With many God has become superfluous. Possessed by the obsession that because they could explain how things happened, God had nothing to do with their happening, the wise no longer conceded to the Creator any place in His own universe. For these, no thought of a future judgment disturbed their bliss; for there being no God, there could be no judge. But others, unable quite to dispense with God, created for themselves a God in their own image. Having themselves lost the sense of sin, they could no longer conceive God as angry against sin or waging war upon sin. The one attribute of God

which they could conceive was love. The God of the latest generation became a Being all compact of amiability and sentimentality, so divorced from justice and righteousness that He could no longer judge and no longer condemn. When justice and mercy conflicted, mercy always held the field. The God Who sat on the throne of the universe was now a God Who no longer could command respect. Justice and judgment were no longer the foundations of His throne. His devotees could live as they listed. For, whatever they did, their God was so pitiful and so weakly compassionate that He no longer meted out righteous judgment nor turned any sinner into hell. And one need not wonder that the result was the world as we know it—a world freed from restraint and discipline, hastening to the chaos of disintegration and doom.

## I

We have only to consider the working of God in the world to realise that the whole fabric of human life rests for its well-being upon the foundation of judgment. The conception

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of God feeble in judgment is the offspring of but vain imagining. For everywhere judgment reigns.

The whole of society is reared upon it. At the base of society is the family, and the welfare of the family depends on the fact that each member is responsible to the father. In other days family discipline was a power for righteousness. The decay of family life has sprung from the decay of discipline. Parents confess now their helplessness. "We can no longer control our children," they say, wearily, as if washing their hands of all responsibility. And the end of these children is misery. There are no children more to be pitied than the children of parents who are too amiable to exercise judgment. For they become the pests of society—a plague to their fellows and destruction to themselves.

If the exercise of judgment be the primary requisite of a healthy family life, so also is it of the community. Our lives are safe and our property secure because the community has organised itself for the swift and certain exercise of judgment upon the law-breaker. Were this not so, were men free to work their

will upon us, which of us could count his life safe for a day? The foundation upon which the well-ordered State rears its manifold activities in security is that of exercised judgment. Wherever it fails, there chaos and carnage ensue. The centuries of the past and the day in which we live agree at least that this is true. Whether we look at Russia in the throes of dissolution, at Greece helpless and well-nigh ruined, or at the Isle of unrest near our own shores, we see the misery that falls when judgment fails. It is, indeed, the naked truth that no calamity can overtake any nation greater than that the supreme guidance of its affairs should fall into hands that no longer can vindicate justice through judgment. The family, the community, the nation, and the international relations of humanity, all rest upon this rock—righteous judgment.

And this sense of justice and judgment, which is the framework of society, what is it but a pale reflection of that justice and judgment which are throned at the core of the universe? As there can be nothing in the work of man's hands except what was first in the man, so there can be nothing in the handiwork

of God except what was first in God. And if the dim sense of justice by which we guide our acts impels us to strike, stifling the voice of the heart, rather than spare, stifling the voice of justice, we can be certain that God's perfect justice will vindicate itself in unswerving judgment. Whatever failure there may be on the part of human justice, we can, at least, be certain of this, that the Judge of all the earth will do the right.

## II

The judgment of God is not relegated to a far-off day in the shadowy future; it is for ever being exercised. However solemn it may be to think of a dramatic and cataclysmic judgment before the bar of God in the great assize, it is even more solemn to think that we stand now at God's great judgment throne, and that every day is a day of judgment. Formerly, our fathers thrilled with awe as they thought of coming judgment; we ought to stand in awe when we think of present judgment. For judgment is not so much an event in the future as it is a continuous process in the present.

By our attitude to God, by our resistance or conformity to His will, we are now judged.

When we thus realise the ceaseless processes of God's judgments, our startled eyes quickly behold them all round about us. For God has so ordered that every transgression of His law carries its own punishment in its bosom. The world is filled with the products of His judgments. The drunkard, who breaks the law of temperance and sinks into that slough into which the animals sink not, rapidly reaps in darkened mind, disordered nerves, and palsied frame the judgment of God. The man who makes himself the centre of the universe, and sacrifices the law of love to his selfishness, rapidly reaps the fruit of his sin in that isolation, more terrible than walls of steel, which shuts him in from all sympathy and all love.

“He that shuts love out in turn shall be shut out from love,

And on her threshold lie howling in outer darkness.”

But more terrible than all do we behold the operation of the law of judgment in the sphere of purity. In other years it was impossible for the preacher to speak of this. But now,

stung broad awake, we realise that we must look facts in the face, and turn the searchlight on the dark places whose nonexistence we foolishly assumed. What does God do with those who transgress the law of purity? He visits them with the most awful judgment. The fruit of sin is paralysis, the enfeebled brain, the diseased body, the vitiated heredity, so that whole families are swept out of existence. The innocent suffer with the guilty. Half the blinded children are blinded through the sin of their parents. Their growth is checked and hideous deformities produced—a veritable massacre of the innocents.

If you think the preaching of the judgment of God antiquated, this is what you should do. Go to the poor-houses, the hospitals, the gaols, and ponder the sights which you there shall see, and ask how these men and women came to be wreckage and driftwood on the human sea. And walk through the streets with open eyes, and you will see God's judgment working ceaselessly, His great winnowing-fan for ever separating the wheat from the chaff, until corrupt humanity is piled up in refuse heaps and there slowly consumed by destructive processes

infinitely more terrible than the blaze of material flame. The essence of all woe is in the cry of the man who, faced at last with incurable paralysis as the fruit of his sin, cried out, "My God, why did not somebody warn me?" How incredible that anyone should be unconscious of the dread solemnity of life, blind to that judgment throne at which each individual soul stands thus every day and every hour!

### III

The process of the Divine judgment can be seen on a greater stage when we look beyond the individual to the nation and contemplate the history of man in his corporate capacity. When nations are viewed in the light of God's moral law, then the history of the world is mainly the history of human crime and of the ensuing judgment. This is the record with which the Bible is filled: the record of Israel's sin and of the judgment of their sin. The Assyrian is the instrument of Divine justice; exile and woe the fruit of sin.

All history glows with the same truth, and thus all history is sacred. The most gifted

race that ever lived, whose literature and art are still the despair of those who would follow their steps, surrendered to the base and the sensual, and were swept into destruction, leaving behind the Greece we know to-day. Rome conquered the world, but in the day of its triumph was conquered by its lusts, and over the Alps came the scourge of God. In fire and sword and blood the gangrene of Imperial Rome was at last consumed. In these latter years we have beheld the same dread forces at work. France, which made all Europe cower at her feet, fifty years later lay prostrate at the feet of Germany. For France surrendered herself to corruption, and threw to the winds the restraints of that religion which she now spurned. When the enemy swept to the gates of Paris forty years ago, no man's word in France could be believed! In "extinguishing the light of heaven," France extinguished the might of her right hand; and in our day Paris was saved because the British in the West and the Russians in the East were its invisible defenders. If history proves anything, it proves that judgment follows hard in the wake of degeneration; that the universe is so ordered that

the stars in their courses fight against every Sisera.

To-day, before God's judgment throne are gathered all nations, and the sheep are being parted asunder from the goats. All round us the heavens are ablaze with the Divine judgment. It was inevitable that it should be so, for humanity had deposed God and placed Mammon on the throne. Men were sinking in the morass of foul pleasure, and their eyes were blinded. Idealism was dying, and sanctity had become a jest. If humanity were not to be lost to God, the process of crowding God out of their lives had to be brought to a halt. As the slowly accumulating forces at last burst out into volcanic eruption, so the slowly accumulating evils in the world at last burst into the tornado of war, which now devours them. In a measure more awful than it has ever been meted to the world before, judgment is poured out upon the earth. Races which ceased to believe in it now behold it. Before the eyes, naked, appalling, colossal, it looms. The veil which hides the unseen has been suddenly rent asunder, and a voice ringing from heaven cries to men: "Behold what comes to men when

they defy God; while there is yet time, make haste and repent." And on men suddenly awakened from slumber there is dawning again the realisation of life's moral values and spiritual issues, and awed lips murmur: "we see." And preachers raise their voices once more, and proclaim God's righteous judgments. They seem unreal and far remote already, the days when men thought there was no sword of judgment with God. Therein lies the hope of the future. For as there is no hope of an army that knows not the judgment seat of discipline, so there can be no hope of humanity walking in the paths of moral straightness without the sense that they are standing at the judgment seat of God. Our wakening to judgment is the bugle-note of hope.

#### IV

But to all that you may object that you are wholly unconscious of having done anything deserving of judgment, and wholly unconscious of any judgment. That is the most terrible of all the symptoms of our moral decay. It was always like that in past ages.

Judgment befell, and nations came to the end, not even knowing that it was the end. The Romans battered the walls of Zion, but the Jew refused to believe in the end. Empires fell into ruin, but their citizens ever refused to believe that the fruit of centuries, that ancient civilisations which appeared eternal, were crumbling before their eyes. They faced the great assize, but knew it not. Once more history repeats itself, and a world, unconscious of judgment, is being judged.

What happens at last is this: the veil of illusion is stripped from our eyes, and we behold reality. With the unveiling of the eyes in death, the soul knows itself already judged. Events which at the time seemed commonplace and trifling will stand forth decisive, pregnant with the issues of eternity. And such common-places: sharing a meal with a hungry labourer, giving of our love to the poor who knock tremulously at the door, visiting a poor sick neighbour and cheering him up—acts so small that we deem them as nothing. Yet the Lord says: "that was great; ye did it to Me." When we took Him in, all unknowing, and fed Him and clothed Him in the person of the out-

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cast, in that hour our judgment was sealed—though we knew it not. And in that hour when he shut the door with a snap upon the piteous cry of him who stood without, we were judged—for we shut God out. And, according to the judgment already passed, but now revealed, will the soul in death pass into the nearness to God or the banishment far from Him. The great solemnity of life is therefore this: We stand now at the judgment bar of God; we are now being judged. Death will but reveal the verdict already passed.

## V.

To the soul that sees, however dimly, the working of God's hand, His judgments are not grievous. For the hope of the world is bound up with God's judgment. Were wickedness left unjudged, and corruption unchecked, the world would speedily become a gangrene. What the surgeon's knife is to the diseased body, that the judgment of God is to corrupt humanity. To the power of the sinner to defile and corrupt, it sets a limit. The diseased member is cut off that the body may live.

Were not God's great winnowing-fan ever separating the chaff from the wheat, the growth of the wheat would be imperilled. And though the skies to-day be dark with thick clouds, yet their blackness is irradiated by mercy. Through the roar of destruction comes the still small voice of hope. If a civilization is perishing, it is because it deserved to perish, and that a fairer and more God-like may arise. Wherefore we shall cling to our God. Though He smite, yet will He heal us. For the hearts that turn to Him and seek Him will He make a great light to arise.

THE END







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